EVERY WEEK MARCH 3, 1923

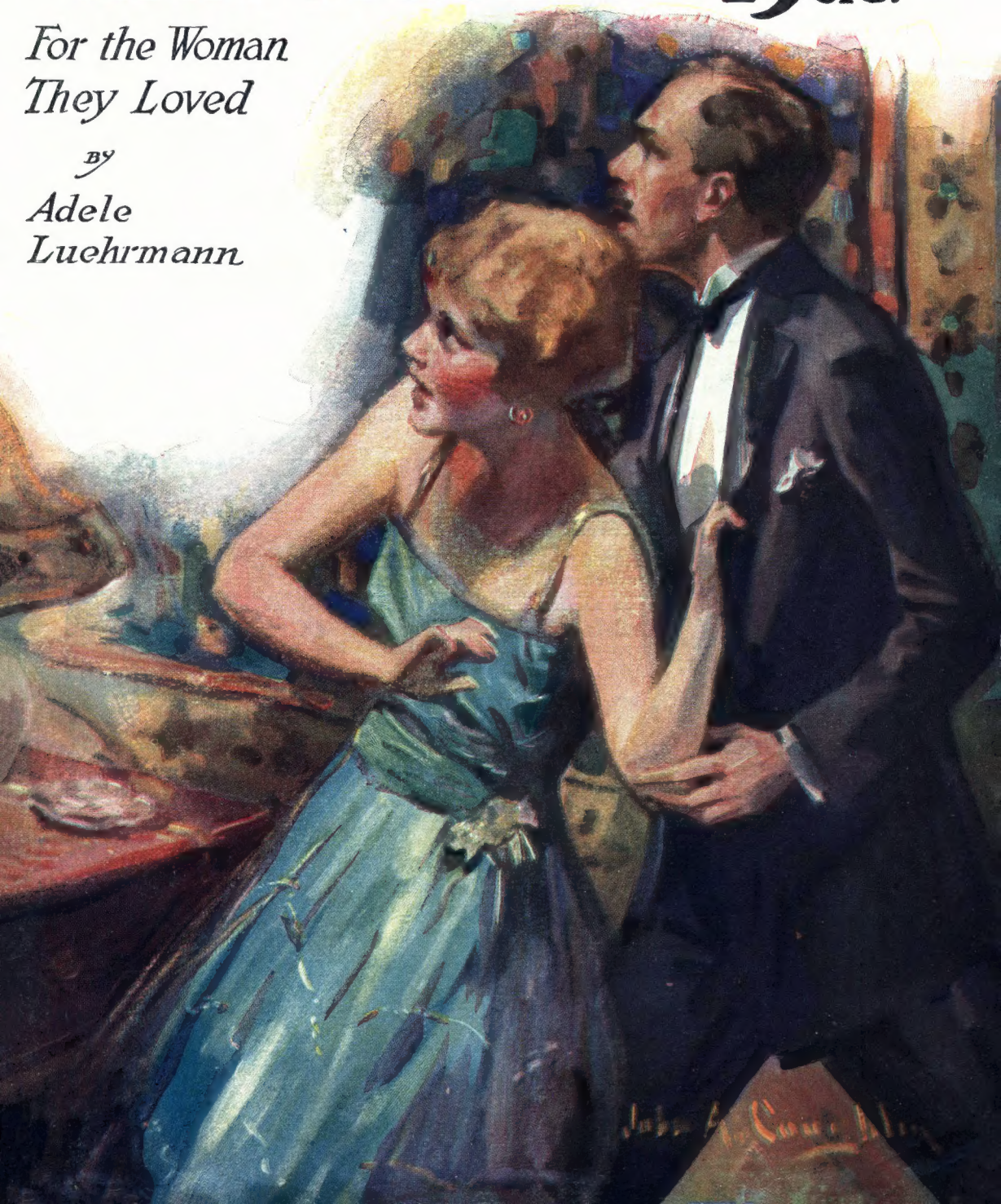
DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE

15 CTS.

For the Woman They Loved

BY

Adele Luehrmann



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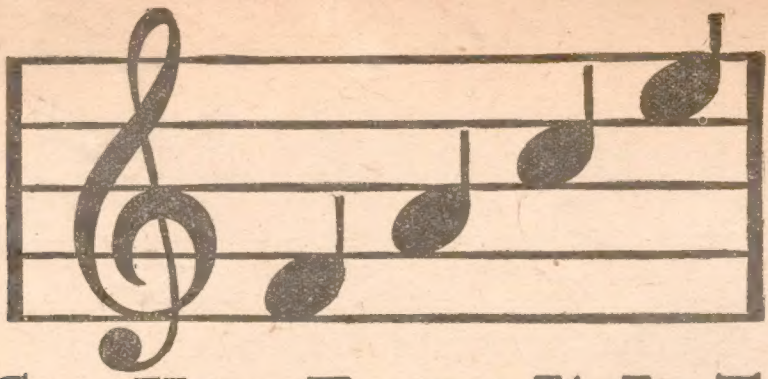

See How Easy It Is To Learn Music This New Way

YOU know how easy it is to put letters together and form words, once you have learned the alphabet. Playing a musical instrument is not very much different. Once you learn the notes, playing melodies on the mandolin, piano or violin is simply a matter of putting the notes together correctly.

The first note shown above is F. Whether you are singing from notes, playing the piano or banjo or any other musical instrument, that note in the first space is always F. The four notes indicated are F, A, C, E, easy to remember because they spell the word "face." Certain strings on the mandolin, certain keys on the piano, represent these same notes—and once you learn them, playing melodies on the instrument is largely a matter of following the notes.

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DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE

EVERY WEEK

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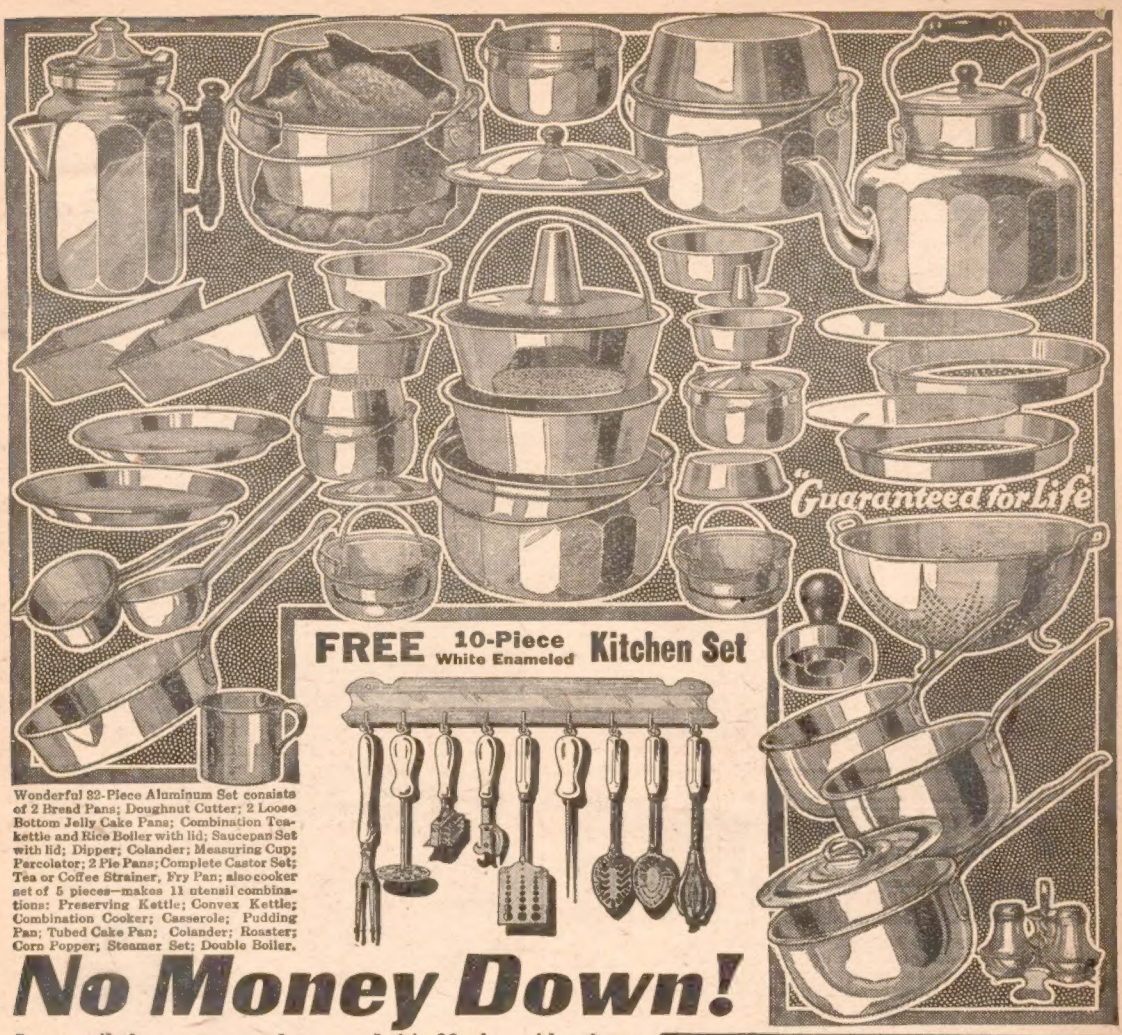

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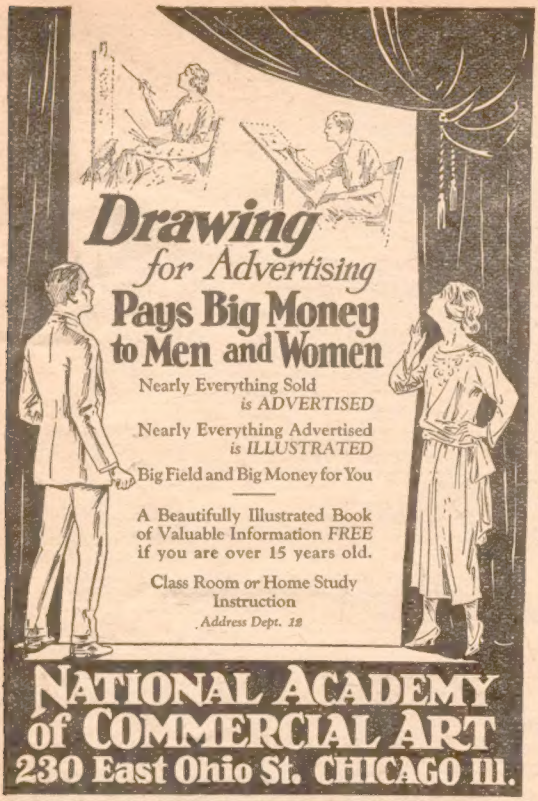

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For the Woman They Loved

by Adele Luehrmann

Author of "The Green Bag," "The Woman in 919," etc.

CHAPTER I.

UPSTAIRS.

NEARLY all of the unusual experiences that have come my way during my eight years practice of medicine in New York, have been due directly to my profession. And my connection with the curious circumstances surrounding the death of young Ripley Farnsworth was both directly and indirectly due to it.

For Hilda Murray, one of "the women in the case," as the newspapers called them, would hardly in her hectic young life have remembered my humble existence, if she had not happened to need a doctor and stumbled on my name in the list of physicians in the classified telephone directory.

This version of the renewal of our acquaintance Hilda denies. She had thought a thousand times of calling me up, she says, but had been afraid that *I* had forgotten *her,* or that I was married. And, anyhow, I had not paid much attention to her the last time I was at home, and she was not sure I would want to see her again, even if I did remember her. Eight years was an awfully long time. Eight years ago she had been only fifteen, and I had been twenty-three, and now she was twenty-three and I was thirty-one, which made a difference.

It did, as I admitted, but not the sort of difference she meant. She had grown into a young woman, and I had not yet ceased to be a young man. Which fact appeared to surprise her.

I had always seemed so much older than she, and now—strangely—I did not.

She was very pretty; in proof of which I need only say that she was, at the time of Farnsworth's death, one of the small, hand-picked chorus in "Step Lively," a booming Broadway success. So was Bernice Blair. It was she who had got Hilda her job, and Hilda was grateful. And that was how she—and incidentally I—happened to become involved in that unfortunate Farnsworth business.

I had no suspicion of anything out of the way when Hilda, that night after the theater, asked if I should mind joining Miss Blair and a friend of hers for supper instead of going off somewhere by ourselves. Later, looking back, it seemed to me that she had appeared nervous and worried, but at the time my only conscious impression was that she was anxious that I should consent to the change of plan, which, of course, I did, although I did not like Miss Blair, and I did not expect to enjoy her society nor that of her friend, Farnsworth, whom I had never met.

Until that night I had never heard of Ripley Farnsworth. I had met Miss Blair several times at the theater, when I called there after the performance for Hilda, and once she had gone to supper with us. But I knew nothing whatever about her except what Hilda had told me, and she had never mentioned Farnsworth or any other man in connection with her friend. Hilda is the soul of loyalty and, thank Heaven, not a gossip.

Consequently my mind was a clean slate so far as Farnsworth was concerned. And I had no prejudice against Miss Blair. She was not Hilda's kind, that was all, and I regretted Hilda's friendship with her, but I realized that when a girl is on her own in the world she has to take it as she finds it, just as a man does. Miss Blair, according to Hilda, was a good-hearted sort, always doing something for somebody. And she had had a very hard and unhappy childhood, with no advantages of any kind, and deserved great credit for what she had succeeded in making of herself.

That was Hilda's view. And I dare say it was the just one. But I could not see where any credit was due Miss Blair for being what she was. She had not acquired her beauty of face and figure by hard work or force of character, and it was to those natural endowments, and not to talent or virtue, that she owed her position on the stage. Still, of course, she might have done worse for herself. She might have stuck to the man she married at sixteen, who beat her when he was drunk.

Which brings me back quite naturally to Farnsworth. That he was the worse for alcohol was plain to me the minute I saw him. Not that he did not walk or talk straight; it was only his eyes that betrayed him. He was rather above middle height and well built, or appeared so in his finely cut evening clothes, and he was handsome at first glance. But his face was weak—the mouth especially—and he had a tic, a spasmodic twitching of the muscles of his left cheek. And a tic is a physical abnormality which, in my judgment, always has a mental counterpart.

He greeted me cordially, assuming the manner of the host of the party, and announced that he had a couple of taxis waiting outside, and that we weren't going to any of the Broadway deserts; we were going to a place where the eighteenth amendment had never been ratified. Knowing that he had had more than enough to drink, as it was, I was relieved to learn that the place in question was his own home, where, if he drank himself under the table, he could be left there.

Nevertheless that sort of party did not appeal to me, and I looked around

at Hilda, hoping that she felt the same way about it, and that it was not too late for her to change her mind. And it was the look she gave me in return that was my first inkling that she had a reason for our going with Miss Blair and Farnsworth that she had not told me. My second hint to that effect came when we reached the street and the two waiting taxicabs.

"We don't need two taxis," Miss Blair announced in her high, nasal voice. "One's enough for four."

"Too crowded," answered Farnsworth.

"Not at all. One's enough," she insisted. "Come on, Hilda," and she and Hilda got into the same cab. Farnsworth started to protest again, appealing to me for support.

"All right, you two men can go in the other. Hilda and I'll go in this," declared Miss Blair. Which of course settled the matter, and Farnsworth and I got into the cab with them.

The girls did most of the talking on that ride, I remember, chatter about their show and others. And Farnsworth made a remark or two about the "real stuff" he was going to give us. I said nothing, but I liked the party less than ever.

I had supposed we were bound for some bachelor apartment house, where our host had a couple of rooms, and when we stopped before a very fine private dwelling in a fashionable East-side block, I thought the driver had made a mistake. But, no. This was where Farnsworth lived, it appeared. He got out and paid the fare, leaving me to help the girls.

I have wondered time and again how we could all have so completely forgotten that taxicab driver. I mean afterward. Even Corliss forgot him. And he had been so cautious and discreet, had Corliss. Farnsworth had stumbled on him after the theater and casually invited him to join the party, and Corliss had accepted the invitation, but had prudently postponed his advent until we were in the safe privacy of the Farnsworth house. He had even left his cab at the corner and walked to the house. Yet he, too, made the fatal error of forgetting that we had not taken that precaution.

Corliss had met Miss Blair before, it appeared, but not Hilda, and I, too, was a stranger to him. He was about Farnsworth's age, twenty-seven. They had been college classmates, and, like Farnsworth, he was married. Hence his discretion. However that either of them was married I did not learn until after Farnsworth was dead. I supposed that the house was his father's, and that the other members of the family were away, out of town, as he said he was living there alone, with only the butler to look after things.

The real state of affairs never occurred to me, of course; and I don't imagine it occurred to him to explain. Probably he thought I knew. Hilda knew, but, as I have already said, she had never even mentioned Farnsworth to me.

He unlocked the door of the house and then led the way upstairs to a beautifully furnished reception room on the second floor, at the back. And here I may as well stop and describe the plan of the house, which must be kept clearly in mind, if one is to understand just what happened there that night, and how it happened. Not that the arrangement of the rooms is unusual in any way for a New York house. Quite the contrary. It is exactly like thousands of others and exceedingly simple. But it was just that, its utter simplicity, that made things so puzzling.

On the ground floor there was a reception hall, the width of the house, with the butler's pantry and dining room behind it, and on the second floor the back reception room, already mentioned, and a front reception room, used

only for formal occasions. The front room was shut off from the back room by double doors and curtains, and was, no doubt, handsomely furnished; I don't know; we didn't see it. That is, I didn't. I can't vouch for any one but myself on that point.

On the third floor there were two large bedrooms, each with its own bath, and the same on the floor above that. On the fifth floor, the top, were four smaller rooms and a bath, for the servants. The kitchen, pantries, and the servants' dining room were in the basement. There were six floors, counting the basement, but the plan of them could hardly have been simpler, and the only floors that I was on, at any time, were the ground floor and the two above it.

To go on with my story. We all went up to the back room on the second floor, a most attractive and handsome room. It had been furnished not only with money, but good taste, which was true of the whole place. I shall not attempt any descriptions, because I am not very observant of that sort of detail. I only know that as soon as I entered the reception hall I felt myself in the abode of wealth and culture, as they say in novels. The wealth I felt first with my foot, as I stepped on the thick-piled carpet, but the culture hit me in the eye, as it were. The reception room looked to me like a room on the stage, because on the stage was the only place I had ever seen a room anything like it, so harmonious and quietly luxurious and elegant.

The first thing Farnsworth did, after switching on the light, was to switch on the victrola, some wild jazz record that went with that room about as well as Beethoven would go with Broadway. Then he and Miss Blair started dancing. They called to Hilda and me to follow their example, but Hilda said she was tired. And she looked tired, I thought. I was too stupid to see that she was worried. The dancing was as wild as the music and was further evidence, had I needed any, that our host was not sober. When it was over Miss Blair's hair was somewhat the worse for it, and she wanted to stop, but Farnsworth wouldn't. Finally the doorbell rang, and he had to stop to go down and let Corliss in. The butler, he explained, had had orders earlier in the evening to go to bed and stay there.

As soon as Farnsworth was out of the room, Miss Blair stopped the victrola and went over to a mirror to put her hair to rights. In the mirror I could see her frowning, her dark brows almost meeting in the intensity of her scowl. She did not say a word, and Hilda said nothing. But I saw them exchange a glance in the mirror, both frowning, and I began to wonder actively what this impromptu party, which none of us guests seemed to be enjoying very much, was all about.

Corliss was introduced, and then Miss Blair said she would simply have to go somewhere and do her hair, and Farnsworth said she could go up to the floor above to his room, where she would find a brush and comb.

"Which room is yours?" she asked him, starting for the door.

He laughed. "They are all mine now!" Then he added: "Come on, I'll show you."

"All right," said Miss Blair. "Come on, Hilda." And Hilda went up with them.

Farnsworth had his watch out when he came down a minute later, and he announced that if we were ready we would adjourn to the dining room and have a reunion with some of our dear old pre-Volstead friends. In the dining room he went through a silly performance of embracing several bottles before opening one of them. There were plates of sandwiches and cake on the sideboard and napkins and plates and glasses, all ready for us. The butler

had evidently done his part before retiring.

The dining room, as I have said, was on the ground floor behind the reception hall and directly under the room that we had left. It was as charming in its way as that room, and that is all I shall say about it. Corliss, when we were alone, told me the age of English history to which the sideboard belonged, but I have forgotten which period it was. I have said that everything I saw in the house was handsome and appropriate, and I'll have to let it go at that. The reason I have said so much as I have about the furnishings, is because I was so impressed. Which makes it unnecessary to state that neither my friends nor my patients are numbered among the idle rich.

Farnsworth took a couple of drinks in rapid succession, which, on top of what he had already had, were all he needed to make him visibly drunk, even to the lay eye of Corliss. He began hugging the bottles again and whispering vows of love to them in the most idiotic fashion, and I recall thinking that, as he stood there in front of that magnificent old English sideboard, in that softly lighted, charming room, with a bottle of whisky clasped to his heart and spilling out onto his white waistcoat, and with his weak, twitching face, he made a good model for a painting of the prodigal son.

He was just beginning a love song to the bottle he was hugging, when the doorbell rang. It stopped him instantly. He broke off short, straightened himself with a jerk, and stood listening. Then he set the bottle on the sideboard, turned, and looked at his watch.

"On the dot," he muttered. He looked at me, then at Corliss. "Have to ask you to excuse me for a few minutes," he said in a perfectly sober voice. "That's some one to see me—a little matter of business—unavoidable—sorry—won't be long." And with other disjointed mutterings of apology he went out, closing the door behind him.

Moved by the same impulse Corliss and I looked at the time. My watch stood at midnight.

"Twelve o'clock," he whispered, blinking his small, round eyes at me. "Wonder who that is?"

I was silent. I had not the remotest idea who my host's late caller was, of course, and from his tone neither had Corliss. He got up with obvious caution and quite shamelessly tiptoed over to the door to listen. I was on the point of protesting when the doorbell rang again.

Corliss turned his round eyes on me again, as if to ask—or so I interpreted his glance—what I thought Farnsworth could be doing that he hadn't answered the bell. Then he pressed his ear against the crack of the door. It would be useless, I decided, to comment on the indecency of such eavesdropping, and accordingly I said nothing. A moment later Corliss was nearly knocked off his feet by the sudden opening of the door in his face. Before he could recover his footing sufficiently to speak, the door had closed again, and on the floor lay our overcoats and hats and the girls' wraps. We had taken them off on our arrival and left them on a rack in the hall. And for some reason Farnsworth didn't want them there when he admitted his late visitor.

Corliss stared at the things on the floor and then at me. Then the closing of the outer door reached us, and he hastily replaced his ear against the crack. From his manner I was sure he heard nothing enlightening, and presently he turned, looked again at the heap of clothing at his feet and again at me.

"That's a funny thing for him to do," he whispered. Then he nodded wisely. "We're not supposed to be here, that's it," he announced, adding the next moment: "I'd give something

to know who that is calling at such an hour. Don't you think it's strange?"

"Oh, I don't know," I answered noncommittally and went over and picked up the things from the floor and put them on a couple of chairs.

"It was somebody he was expecting," continued my companion who appeared to have a habit of stating the obvious. "'On the dot,'" he said; "don't you remember?"

I nodded and went back to my seat at the table, and he resumed his. He was silent for a few moments, his eyes raised to the ceiling. But we could hear nothing—no steps, I mean. The floor above was carpeted.

He poured himself a drink and glanced at the food on the sideboard. Curiosity had not affected his appetite, but he did, it seemed, possess some principles of conduct. For he turned his eyes back to me and remarked that he guessed we had better wait until the girls came down, to which I agreed.

"Known Rip long?" he inquired.

I furnished a brief explanation of my presence.

"Known him for years," he informed me in return. "All-right enough chap—some ways," he continued with a disparaging shrug. "Drinks like a fish, though. Everything to live for, and he lives for booze. Why, he——"

I interposed here to change the subject, making some admiring remark about the sideboard. It was then that he told me its period. He seemed to know about such things, and the subject occupied him for a few minutes. Exactly how long we were on it I don't know; I am not a good judge of the passage of time; but he declared later that Farnsworth had not been upstairs more than five minutes when we heard the shots.

Corliss was just raising his glass to his mouth, I remember, when the first shot came from the room above. It seemed to me to have come from directly over my head, and it must have seemed the same to Corliss, who was seated on the other side of the table, for he jerked his head upward involuntarily, as I did, and stared at the ceiling.

At the second shot we both automatically rose, he so abruptly that he knocked his chair over. He made no move to pick it up; he didn't appear to know it had fallen. Following the shot there had come almost immediately a heavy thud from the same direction, which was unmistakably the sound of some one falling, and Corliss and I exchanged a glance. An expression of alarm was in his little round eyes, and I don't doubt my eyes looked much the same.

Without speaking I started for the door, and he following me.

"Say, wait a minute!" he exclaimed anxiously. "Those were shots!"

It was another of his superfluous statements, and I paid no attention to it, but he was on my heels and barked again.

"Say, stop a minute!"

With my hand on the doorknob, I stopped, and looked at him.

"Say, Rip is drunk," he went on, clutching my arm. "And—and I can't afford to get mixed up in anything like this. I'm married." He ended on a high note that was almost a wail.

My reply was to shake his hand from my arm and to jerk the door open. In the hall stood Hilda, near the foot of the stairs, looking up. She turned at the opening of the door and hurried over to me.

"What's happened?" Corliss whispered to her.

She shook her head. She seemed too frightened to speak. Her face was white, and her bare shoulders were hunched together.

"Who's up there?" Corliss asked.

Again she shook her head, leaning against the door jamb. I took her to the nearest chair and put her in it.

Then, as I turned to go, a thought struck me, and I stopped.

"Where's Miss Blair?" I questioned.

"Upstairs," she answered. "I was waiting for her."

"Where were you when—just now?" I asked.

"Here—down here by the steps. I was waiting for Bernice. She said she'd be right down."

"Did you hear anything—anything else—any talking?" I asked.

She shook her head, and I hurried away. As I went up the steps I glanced over the railing and saw Corliss still at the dining-room door, following me with his little round eyes.

CHAPTER II.

SETTING THE STAGE.

THE thick stair carpet smothered the sound of my steps, and when I got to the top I stopped to listen before proceeding further. I could hear nothing, which was certainly strange—not a sound. The heavy velvet curtains at the door of the reception room were drawn close together, and neither light nor sound issued from behind them. The door from the hall into the front room was, as before, closed. But it was from the rear room that the shots had come. No question about that.

I went up to the curtains and cautiously separated them a few inches—cautiously, because I remembered that Farnsworth was drunk, and when a man is drunk he is insane, and an insane man armed with a deadly weapon is a person to be approached with circumspection. Curiously enough I had made up my mind that Farnsworth had done the shooting, and looking back I think that feeling of mine must have been due to his manner and tone, as he looked at his watch and muttered: "On the dot." There had been animosity in his tone and in his face.

But across the room, on the floor before the high, carved marble mantel, Farnsworth was lying motionless. And standing beside him, looking down at him, frowning, was another man, a young man with a pale, set face, a tall young man with dark hair and a swarthy complexion, wearing a blue serge sack suit.

Farnsworth must be dead, I thought. I could not see his face, for he lay on his right side with his face turned from me, but the inaction of the other man could indicate nothing else. He was as motionless as the man at his feet.

I waited—half a minute perhaps—I don't know how long, for him to move, then I stepped into the room. He looked up at me with a start of surprise, took a backward step of recoil, then stood still again, staring at me.

"I beg your——" I stopped. It struck me as absurd to beg pardon for intruding under such circumstances, and, as I could think of nothing more appropriate to say, I said nothing.

"I beg your pardon," he said then, apparently as unable as I to find anything better than the set phrase. "But you're not the butler—of course?"

"I'm a guest," I answered, advancing again, "and I happen to be a doctor."

"He's dead," said the tall man in a low, hoarse tone. "He shot himself."

"Shot himself?" I echoed in astonishment, kneeling beside my host's body.

"He was drunk, I think. Wasn't he?"

"He had been drinking," I said.

"I thought so. He took exception to something I said to him and, before I knew what was happening, had whipped out a revolver and let go at me. Not being armed I was making for the door when I heard a second shot and then a fall, and there he was, as he is now—dead. My Lord, I can't believe it—I can't believe it."

Unconsciously he touched his left shoulder, and I noticed now that he had been shot there, that crimson was ooz-

ing from it and discoloring the cloth of his coat, and that his hand was bloody when he took it away.

"Better let me have a look at that," I said; but he shook his head, motioning toward Farnsworth. What he thought or hoped I could do for a dead man, I didn't know, but I had intended to examine the body and now did so. The fatal bullet had evidently pierced the heart, causing instant death, as he had stated. Farnsworth must have fallen just where he stood. His legs were doubled up awkwardly. His face was distorted and horrible to see, and crimson was soaking his shirt and waistcoat, covering the whisky stains and overflowing onto the blue-gray carpet beneath him.

I was careful not to alter the position of the body in any way, knowing the law's requirements in that respect, that everything about the body and the surrounding premises must be left exactly as found until the police arrive to take charge.

The pistol, which I should have mentioned before, was on the floor near the dead man, and on closer view it proved to be a revolver of thirty-eight caliber. But that, too, I was careful not to move. The matter of finger prints always concerns the investigators, I knew. I was disposed to believe the story I had been told, for it impressed me as entirely plausible, considering Farnsworth's intoxicated condition, but there was a possibility that it was not true. Besides, no motive for the suicide had been given me, nor for the attempt at murder, ascribed to the dead man.

As I rose, my companion spoke. "You said you were a guest here. Do you know where there's a telephone? The police must be notified."

"A telephone?" I looked about and shook my head. "There must be one somewhere—downstairs, perhaps."

"You're not at home here, I see," he remarked.

"No, I've never been here before to-night."

"May I ask your name? Mine's Miller—Arnold Miller."

"Mine is Chilton," I said.

"I'd been trying to see Farnsworth," he said. "I'd been trying for weeks to see him—about a matter of business—and he wouldn't see me—until to-night. He said he was going out—to the theater—but, if I wished to come around here later, he'd be sure to be back by twelve."

He paused a moment, then grimly: "I should have known he'd be in no condition to be talked to at such an hour. But it's no good regretting what can't be remedied."

Under the circumstances, he was remarkably self-possessed, I thought, and I was favorably impressed by the fact. It indicated, in my opinion, strength of character and intelligence to face facts squarely and not waste time and energy in futile lamentations. And no one who saw his white, drawn face could have thought him indifferent to what had occurred.

"I'm glad for my sake that you were here, doctor," he continued after another slight pause. "It's a ghastly business to have to face alone, but I'm sorry for your sake. I hope you don't mind it too much."

"Not for myself," I replied. "If I can be of any service I'm very glad of it." I hesitated a moment. The thought of Hilda being mixed up in such an affair, in association with a girl like Bernice Blair, was very unpleasant to me, and I was wondering if I couldn't manage somehow to save her.

"But," I resumed, "unfortunately I am not the only other person here. There are other guests."

"What?" He spoke sharply, frowning. "Not—women?"

I nodded.

"Not—that Blair—not Miss Blair?"

"Yes."

"My word, what an awful mess!" He threw up his head, as if calling on Heaven to witness the mess, then he looked back at me. "Who else?" he questioned.

"A man named Corliss," I said, "and a——"

"Corliss? Will Corliss?" he asked.

"Yes, I believe that's his name," I replied.

"Who else? Any more women?"

"One."

"Well, they had better be told what they're in for."

He turned away and sat down. His face was white, and he looked very weak. I hesitated a moment, then suggested again that he had better allow me to have a look at his shoulder. The stain on his coat had already spread considerably, and while a bullet in the shoulder is not like a bullet at large among the vital organs, it calls for attention, and I said as much.

"Later," he answered. "Where are those people?"

"Downstairs in the dining room. I'll go down," I said and started for the door.

Considering my recent insight into the methods of Corliss, his sudden entrance at this point should not have surprised me. And I was not so much surprised as startled. The situation was on my nerves a bit, I suppose. He had been eavesdropping again, of course, and made no pretense to the contrary. He had heard what we had been saying and was violently opposed to the conclusions reached.

"Why should we be dragged into this?" he demanded excitedly. "We had nothing to do with it, and we know nothing about it. Why should we be dragged in then? It will only make a scandal and do a lot of harm to innocent people, and no good to anybody. I, for one, can't afford to be mixed up in it. I'm married."

"Rather late remembering it, aren't you?" asked Arnold Miller dryly, with a contemptuous look in his dark eyes.

"That's neither here nor there," retorted Corliss. "The point is that there's no *need* of anybody being dragged in. We had nothing to do with it."

"You were in the house when it happened."

"What of it? We had nothing to do with it. We don't even know how it happened."

"You were in the house at the time," repeated Miller. "The police have to be notified, and they'll be certain to ask who was in the house at the time."

"Well, you don't have to tell them, do you?"

"I see no reason why I should lie to save your reputation with your wife. Rather late for that, too, isn't it?"

Corliss glared at Miller, but for a moment said nothing in reply, though he looked as if about to explode. His plump face was very red, and his little eyes were popping angrily. Miller was as quiet and self-controlled as he had been all along, and he was still seated.

To my astonishment Corliss mastered his rage and replied in a tone of conciliation. "I'm not thinking only of myself," he said, "there are a couple of girls here, you know. We ought to consider them. And if Rip killed *himself*, as you say, why——"

"He did kill himself!" Miller spoke sharply and rose.

"I haven't said he didn't," returned Corliss.

"You implied it."

"I implied nothing. You didn't wait for me to finish what I was going to say. I was going to say that since Rip had killed himself, why should any of us be dragged in—any of us at all?"

There was a pause, then Miller said slowly: "Just what do you mean by that?"

"Just what I said," answered Corliss.

"Why should anybody at all be dragged in, if Rip committed suicide?"

There was another pause, and when Miller remained silent, Corliss asked: "Does anybody know you came here to-night?"

"No," Miller answered.

"Well, there's nobody knows it now but we three. Even the girls don't know it; and they needn't know it. They know that there was somebody here with Rip, but that's all they know. And you may be sure we won't enlighten them. How about it, doctor?"

Here I'd like to explain that my feelings at this point were rather mixed. I had had enough experience in cases that involved a police investigation to realize that what Corliss had in mind was not an easy thing to carry through successfully. I realized that if it failed it might be exceedingly uncomfortable for all of us, much more so than if we had told the truth in the first place.

On the other hand there was Hilda. The thought of the notoriety she would be let in for otherwise, made me favor taking any chance that offered for protecting her against it. Besides, I believed Farnsworth had committed suicide. Miller's manner had convinced me of it. Corliss' suggestion to the contrary weighed with me not at all, except that it showed that such an interpretation of the case might occur to others, which would be unfortunate for Miller.

"Well," I said in reply to Corliss, "I'll do whatever Mr. Miller wishes. There's no doubt that we should all be saved a good deal of unpleasant publicity and annoyance if we could keep our presence here to-night from becoming known. But I'm not sure that we can."

"Why not?" asked Corliss. "Nobody knows we're here. The butler prepared for a party, but he doesn't know who came, and we haven't touched the food and——"

"You're forgetting the people at the theater," I put in. "Some one there may have seen and recognized Farnsworth."

"What of it? They don't know where you went after you left the theater. They don't know that you came here, do they?"

"No," I admitted; "but they must know we went somewhere, and Miss Blair is so well known about the Broadway restaurants that she can't claim she was at one of them if she wasn't."

"Of course she can," insisted Corliss. "If it comes out that she left the theater to-night with Rip, it won't be for several days, and she can say anything she pleases. By that time no one will be able to say positively whether she was where she says she was, or not."

That sounded plausible, and I made no further protest.

"*Nobody* knows I am here but you people," continued Corliss. "It's up to you whether I get dragged into the affair or not. But if you admit you were here, and the police start questioning you, you'll tell all you know before they're through with you. The only safe way is to stick to it that you were not here, no matter what happens."

"At the worst you can all say that you had left before I got here," added Miller, who had been listening in silence. "I have no desire to drag any one in."

"That won't help me any," objected Corliss. "I can't have it known that I was here—even if this hadn't happened." He glanced over at Farnsworth's body. "I don't see, Miller," he went on earnestly, "why anybody need ever know you had anything to do with it. It seems to me it's quite unnecessary for you to implicate yourself. Because that's the word, you know—implicate. You say Rip shot himself, and I believe you, but a lot of people won't."

"I'm not afraid of that," answered

Miller, "with this bullet in my shoulder."

"Oh, you could have done that yourself,- you know—you *could* have."

Miller was silent. It was plain that Corliss had presented matters in a new light. He looked down at Farnsworth's body, then about the room, frowning thoughtfully. Suddenly he spoke.

"I'm glad you men are here. I want you to search me—to convince yourselves that I have no pistol on me. I'd like you to make sure of it—just in case——"

"Nonsense," exclaimed Corliss, in a deprecatory tone.

"It's not nonsense," replied Miller. "It's a very important matter for me—or may be. I didn't realize it before, but I do now. Search me, please."

We made the search, of course, when he continued to insist on it, and that was how I happened to discover that he had a wound in the back of his shoulder, that the bullet had gone clear through. I announced the fact and asked how he had been standing or sitting when shot, with a view of course to locating the bullet.

He turned instantly and went to the mantel and took his position at one end, his right arm resting along the ledge, his body turned halfway toward the center of the room. Then he pointed with his left hand toward the floor, indicating a spot about five feet from him and several feet from the mantel. That, he said, was where Farnsworth had been standing, and, as he spoke, he turned to the wall at his back, indicating the line he thought the bullet must have followed after passing through his body. And there in the wall we saw the bullet hole.

Let me pause here for a moment to say that my confidence in Miller was then and there established unshakably. If he had been uncertain about the point in question, or had had to stop to think, it would not have seemed to me unnatural under the circumstances. It is not always easy to remember just what one's position was at any given moment, especially during what appeared to have been a heated conversation. But he was not in the least uncertain. He did not for an instant hesitate. And I am sure he did not know where that bullet hole was, or that the bullet was not in his shoulder until I made the discovery. And if any one doubts this, his first remark after locating the bullet hole should be convincing.

"That settles it," he said, staring grimly at the hole. "I was just thinking we might just go away and say nothing about what's happened. But that hole there gives the thing away."

"No, it doesn't," I said quickly. "It saves the day. Because, remember, two shots were fired from that revolver, and if only one bullet were accounted for, the police would naturally be suspicious. As it is, they won't be. It will look as if Farnsworth's aim had been unsteady, and he'd shot wild the first time."

"As he might have done easily enough, drunk as he was," put in Corliss. "What we want to do," he continued eagerly, "is to fix things so they will look as if he had been drinking before he did it—drinking alone, I mean. It will be easy enough. We can bring up a bottle and a glass and put them on the mantel. Then we'll put the other glasses and bottles and food into the pantry and then—just go away, that's all, and keep still."

Miller looked at me, as if for my opinion of these suggestions. It was obvious now that he was as anxious as Corliss or I to avoid any public connection with Farnsworth's death. And by that time I had banished my misgivings. It was worth taking a chance on, anyhow. We were all innocent of any wrong, and our motives for deceiving the police and public were good—mine was, at any rate. Hilda was as good as gold, I was sure, and her people

were simple, decent folk who would feel themselves disgraced by her connection with such an affair. It was decidedly worth taking a risk for.

"It's worth trying, I think," was my spoken verdict.

"Well"—he seemed still to hesitate—"all right. But the others—the women have still to be consulted."

"Oh, they'll be all right," asserted Corliss confidently. "I'll go down and bring them up."

"That's not necessary, is it?" I asked, stopping him as he was making for the door. "They can be told downstairs. They won't want to come in here."

"I guess that's so," he agreed. Then he went out.

"You'd better come home with me, Mr. Miller," I said then, "and let me look after that shoulder. It's fortunate that I'm a doctor, and that you don't have to go outside for one."

"Yes, that is fortunate," he agreed quietly. "I'll be glad to have you look after me," he added, then inquired with a shade of anxiety in his voice if he would have to see any one besides me at my home.

I reassured him. I lived alone, I said, on the ground floor of a small apartment house. He would not even have to go up in the elevator.

"Do you really think we can put this thing through that we're attempting?" he asked.

"I think it's well worth trying," I answered.

He looked down at the dead man on the floor. "I'd give everything I have in this world to have him standing here alive again," he said in a low tone. "It's not for myself that I'm——"

What he was going to say I never knew, for at that moment Corliss burst into the room.

"The girls have gone!" he exclaimed breathlessly. He must have run upstairs.

"Gone?" I echoed.

"They're not downstairs, and their wraps are not there, either."

"They are upstairs then," said I. "I'll call them."

"No, don't call. The butler may hear and come down. He's asleep on the top floor."

I conceded the wisdom of the warning. I had forgotten the butler. I went quietly up to the second floor. Here I found a light in the hall and another in the back room, the door of which was open. But there was no one in the room, and it was certainly the room the girls had been in, because the other room on that floor, the front room, was dark. Corliss was right; they must have gone. But why had they gone in such a precipitate way and alone?

I went downstairs and questioned Corliss. Where had the girls been when he had come upstairs the first time?

"Miss Murray was in the dining room," he replied. "She said Miss Blair was upstairs."

"Didn't you see Miss Blair at all?"

"No, of course not. She was upstairs, I tell you."

"You haven't seen her since she went upstairs to do her hair?"

"No, she must have come down while we three were in here talking. Guess she heard enough to gather what had happened, and she and Miss Murray decided to go while the going was good. They're all right. We don't have to worry about them. They won't talk—Bernice won't anyhow. She has faults, but she's a good sort. She knows how I'd feel about any publicity, and she'd keep still for my sake, if not for her own. And, anyhow, I'll see her right away and fix things—with both of them."

Corliss spoke confidently, but it was evident that the unexpected action of the girls disturbed Miller. Corliss noticed it, too.

"It'll be all right, I'll fix things," he repeated, reassuringly. "Fortunately it's Saturday night, and there won't be any newspaper out to spread the news for over twenty-four hours. That gives us time. It will be Monday before any of Bernice's friends hear what's happened, and some time after that before their talk reaches the police, and Rip's friends, who know about his affair with Bernice, will shut up like clams, you know that, Miller. And so will his—his family."

I noticed that Corliss stammered a little in mentioning Farnsworth's family, but the significance of his hesitation did not dawn upon me until a few minutes later. I noticed, too, that he turned away from Miller when he added: "His family won't want any publicity, I should think," and I noticed that Miller made no response.

But I was too much in the dark to understand what was not spoken, and, besides, at that time I was still ignorant of the fact that Farnsworth had a wife. Corliss, I must admit, was a far cleverer person than I had given him credit for being. He had taken the situation in hand at the very start and kept his control of it until he had had his way. It was he who set the stage, so to speak, for the police. He trotted about the room setting chairs that had been pushed aside for the dancing back into their places, and he wiped off any possible finger prints from the mantel and the furniture. Then, while we stood idly looking on, he went downstairs and brought up the bottle of whisky that poor Farnsworth had lately hugged and put it on the mantel with a glass beside it—Farnsworth's glass no doubt.

It was a gruesome business, lying about the dead like that, and to get out of sight of it I went downstairs, remarking, as I left the room, that I would go and put on my overcoat. Miller had his coat in his hand, having removed it from a chair when Corliss began putting the room to rights, and he was standing near the hall door staring intently at the clean round hole the bullet had made in the painted wall. He seemed not to have heard me.

I went into the dining room to get my overcoat, and, while I was putting it on, Corliss and Miller came downstairs together. The lights that were on in the house must all be left on, Corliss announced, and proceeded to wipe off the table and sideboard and chairs with his handkerchief, cautioning us not to touch anything after he had been over it. He borrowed my handkerchief to wipe the used glasses, then arranged everything on the sideboard, as the butler had left them.

Miller watched him with a frown; when Corliss had finished and was putting on his overcoat, Miller spoke:

"This is sheer folly," he said. "I'm going to telephone to the police. I won't drag any one in. You two can go, and I'll say there was no one in the house when the thing happened except the two of us—Rip and myself. We can never put this thing over."

"Yes, we can," Corliss insisted. "I know how it will be. If you admit you were here, they'll get it out of you that there were others here, too. And there's no use making a scandal if it can be avoided."

They argued for a while, and in the end Corliss had his way, and we all left the house.

CHAPTER III.

MILLER'S STORY.

LOOKING back now to that eventful night I remember, as if it had been only an hour ago, my strange feeling when I followed Corliss out of the dining room and through the hall to the front door. At the foot of the stairs he stopped and looked up, and Miller and I did the same. And that is a pic-

ture that has stayed with me with peculiar distinctness—we three silent men in overcoats and hats, looking and listening up those stairs.

It seemed to me unreal, something I was seeing on the stage or in a moving picture, instead of an actual event in which I in my own person, Doctor Richard Chilton, was taking part. I seemed to myself at the moment to be acting the part, not living it. It was such an extraordinary affair—all of it—Farnsworth's death and our conspiracy of silence. My every-day habit of thought would not instantly adjust itself to things so out of its line, and I think my companions must have been laboring under the same difficulty. I remember that, when we had satisfied ourselves that we were the only living and waking persons in the house, we looked at one another with sudden intentness, as if not quite sure that we ourselves were awake and alive.

It was Corliss, of course, who took the precaution to make sure that the moment was an auspicious one for our exit. Having looked up and down the block he turned and nodded to us, then allowed us to pass him and noiselessly closed the door behind us. Then without a word he turned one way, we the other. It had been agreed among us that in the event of any one of us scenting trouble, the others were to be warned and joint action taken, if action were necessary.

The feeling of unreality still possessed me, as I walked down the silent block at Miller's side, but in the open it was not so strong as it had been, and I recall wondering if things might not look very different in the morning, if they might not appear only too real in the cold gray light of day, and if we three men might not look like three fools, to imagine we could succeed in what we had attempted.

I kept these thoughts to myself. In fact I said nothing at all, and Miller did not speak, either. I was taking him to my place to see to that shoulder of his, and when I thought we had walked far enough to satisfy the demands of caution, I hailed a taxi, and a few minutes later we had arrived.

He had kept up so well that even I, a doctor, had been deceived by his self-control. But when I had closed the door of my reception room, and we were alone, he sat down in the nearest chair and, before I realized what was coming, slipped from the chair to the floor in a dead faint.

I brought him to, and with his aid I got his clothes off and attended to his wound, which was not at all serious. When I had washed, dressed, and bandaged it I supplied a shirt and undershirt to replace his own, which were left with me. He lived in bachelor quarters himself, he said, with no one about to pry, and he expected to be able to keep the condition of his shoulder to himself. It would have to be dressed every day, of course, and he said he would come in for the purpose the following afternoon at five—the hour suggested by me. Just what might have come to pass by that time neither of us knew, but we agreed that, being Sunday, there were not likely to be any developments that we would hear of.

When he was finally dressed and ready to go he thanked me very formally for my assistance to him in the emergency that had arisen and then turned to the door. And it would not have surprised me in the least to have had him leave without saying anything more. In fact it was what I expected. I knew that there was a good deal more he could say, but he appeared to be such a quiet, self-contained young chap that I had no hope of his suddenly being communicative with me. However at the door he stopped and turned back to me.

"I feel, doctor," he said, speaking

with obvious difficulty, "that I owe you some sort of—of explanation."

"Don't say a word," I replied, "unless you want to. I accept your explanation of what happened."

"I haven't explained what happened," said he. "I've only told you. And you must be wondering what made Farnsworth shoot me and then kill himself.

"You *are* wondering, of course," he insisted when I made a deprecatory movement. "It's only natural that you should wonder why I should want to keep the truth about what happened to-night from getting out. It must look to you as if I were afraid to have it get out; but that's not it at all."

"Of course not," I said. "I understand that it involves—well, that it's probably not yourself you're thinking of."

"That's it exactly," he returned eagerly, giving me a grateful look and speaking in a more confident tone. "If it were only myself I had to consider I'd go straight to the police and tell exactly what happened. That's what I'd like to do. I hate this—this sneaking off as we have."

He looked as if he meant what he said, and I believed him. He had a straight glance that I liked, and it was easy for me to believe that he hated the lie we were acting. I hated it myself. But we were all in the same boat, he and Corliss and I; we were all considering somebody else; Corliss, his wife; I, Hilda; and Miller—— Well, I didn't know whom Miller was considering, but I supposed it must be Farnsworth's family.

For a moment he was silent, then he said suddenly in a different tone: "He was insane—that's the real explanation of—of everything. He wasn't himself when he was drinking, and anyhow he wasn't sane—he really wasn't." His dark eyes regarded me intently. "There are cases like that, aren't there, where a man is under an insane delusion of some sort and yet appears to most people to be perfectly normal?"

"Oh, yes, thousands of cases," I answered, wondering what Farnsworth's delusion had been.

But I was not enlightened on that point. "I had been told he was not—not normal about certain things," Miller continued. "But I didn't believe it. I'd known him for years. We had been at school together and afterward at college. We'd been the closest kind of friends. And—well, I had more influence over him than anybody. I had kept him straight—kept him from drinking, I mean, for a long time. And then quite suddenly he turned against me. He got a crazy idea in his head about me. It—it doesn't matter what it was. There was no truth in it. But he wouldn't even let me try to talk him out of it—he wouldn't even see me until to-night. I had tried to see him, to talk to him any number of times, and he always put me off with some flimsy excuse that I could see was just an excuse. Then at last he said he'd see me if I'd come at twelve o'clock, after he had got back from the theater. I supposed of course he'd be alone. Did he say anything to you about expecting me?"

"Not a word."

"He said nothing to me about anybody being in the house. He let me in himself; he said the butler had gone to bed; he said he was expecting me. He seemed normal enough. I didn't even know he had been drinking until we got upstairs and I saw his eyes. They always showed it. But I'd rather expected that. I knew he was drinking pretty much all the time—that is, I had been told so. That was one of the things I wanted to talk to him about—that and other things—the affair with Miss Blair, for one. He went about everywhere with her openly, and of

course it made an intolerable situation for his wife. In fact it had made—— What's the matter?"

Miller stopped abruptly and stared at me, and I must have looked startled, for I felt so. That Farnsworth had had a wife had somehow never occurred to me. He looked so young for one thing, and for another his living in the house. He had led me to suppose that he was living with his parents. That the house was his did not enter my mind.

"I didn't know he was married," I said in reply to Miller. "I never met him until to-night, you see. I was going to supper with Miss Murray, and she suggested our joining Miss Blair and a friend of hers. Just why I don't know. Miss Murray is an exceedingly nice girl from my home town. She's —well, not Miss Blair's sort at all. But Miss Blair has been kind to her in various ways, and I rather think Miss Blair made a point of her coming along to-night. I got that impression. And—well, that was how I met Farnsworth. But I'd like to make it clear that I didn't know anything about his private affairs, and I'm sure Miss Murray didn't. I'm sure she accepted him, as I did, without question, as a friend of Miss Blair. And, I may as well say, too, that it's on Miss Murray's account that I was in favor of our doing all we could to keep this thing out of the papers. She's a—a thoroughly nice girl, and I—well, I hope to marry her some day."

I did hope to marry Hilda some day. I had got as far as that in the privacy of my own mind, but I had not told her so, and I had had no intention of telling Miller or anybody else at that time. It came out as a natural climax of what I was saying. I was really more disturbed about things than I realized myself, more worried, I mean, about the possible consequences for her, and I seized the first chance that offered to make the situation, so far as she and I were concerned, clear to Miller. And when it came to the point the strongest proof I could give of the kind of girl she was, was to say what I did.

A pause followed. Miller had evidently to readjust his ideas a little, then he nodded and said he was glad I had told him how I was placed, as he had of course not known. And he hoped now for my sake as well as his own that we would be able to carry through what we had begun, that he was thinking about Mrs. Farnsworth, and what it meant to her to have a lot of scandal come out in connection with her husband's death.

"Farnsworth had made it impossible for his wife to go on living in the same house with him," Miller resumed, "and she is now with her mother. And of course she's unhappy. I hoped I might be able to talk a little sense into Rip and bring about a reconciliation. I felt sure I could, if he would give me the chance. That's why I went there at such an hour. I was willing to make any concession, just for the chance to see him alone and talk to him. I couldn't believe that he was really unbalanced, that he would do what he did —shoot me, I mean. But he would not sit down and talk quietly; he began walking about the room and behaving as if he weren't listening to what I was saying, and then all of a sudden he came over to the mantel, where I was standing, and without a word of warning drew his revolver and fired. I knew then that he was really crazy, and that there was nothing for me to do but try to get out of the room before he killed me, and I ran toward the door. He had drawn the curtains when we went into the room, and I remember wondering why he did it, supposing of course that we were alone in the house. I can't believe that he meant to kill me. I can't believe he planned it deliberately. Besides, he wouldn't have had you people there, if he had, would he?"

Appealed to, I replied that if Farnsworth was actually unbalanced mentally, it was no good trying to reason out a motive for his acts. But I said I was sure he had not wanted Miller to know of our presence in the house, because he had been careful to remove our overcoats and wraps from the hall before opening the front door for him, and that he had probably closed the curtains because the girls were upstairs and would be coming down soon, and he didn't want Miller to hear them. That being the case, I said, it struck me as unlikely that he had planned what happened—either to shoot Miller or himself. But I repeated that an insane man's actions and motives are beyond rational explanation.

"But why, if he didn't want me to know any one was in the house, did he have any one there?" Miller wondered.

I couldn't explain, and I said so.

"Why did he take you home with him at all?" he asked me.

"Because he could get what he wanted to drink at home, and he couldn't in a restaurant," I replied. "And it's possible he had forgotten his appointment with you; he had already had too much to drink when I saw him first at the theater."

I felt like adding that, if Miller really wanted the benefit of my opinion as to Farnsworth's motives, he should enlighten me on several important points which he had left in obscurity. Why, for example, had Farnsworth turned against him suddenly? What was the insane delusion of Farnsworth that he had mentioned? What were he and Farnsworth talking about when Farnsworth suddenly drew his revolver? What was that remark of his that Farnsworth had taken exception to?

I did not, however, voice these thoughts, and Miller did not volunteer the information I wanted. He stood with his brows contracted in a deep frown, puzzling over something that apparently was too much for him.

"It's utterly inexplicable," he said. "I shall never understand it."

And the best I could do was to repeat once more that no one could understand the workings of an insane person's mind. I might have said, but did not, that suicide was extremely rare among the insane, that the general feeling that people who take their own lives must be insane, temporarily at least, was contrary to fact; that when an insane person killed himself, it was when temporarily sane. But I preferred not to appear to doubt Miller in any way, because for one thing I wanted to hold aloof from the whole business in so far as I could, and for another thing I did not doubt him as to essentials. I believed that, in the main, things had happened as he had said, and that the unanswered questions that buzzed in my mind were probably unimportant details that did not effect the question of how Farnsworth had met his death.

When he was gone I sat myself down and thought things out very carefully, tried to box the compass and foresee all possible contingencies. The fact that Farnsworth had a wife put a different aspect on the case, a worse one even than it had had before, and I was more concerned than ever by the unpleasant consequences threatening Hilda. It was no comfort to me to remember that I had made no secret to her of my feeling about her association with Miss Blair, and that I now had the right to say "I told you so." I wanted to get her out of the mess and was determined to do it, if it was humanly possible. And the first thing I meant to do was to see her. But that must wait until morning. I could not even call her up until then, because she lived in a boarding house. But I determined to see her at the first possible moment, and with that idea in mind I went to bed.

CHAPTER IV.

HILDA'S HESITATIONS.

NEXT morning, before eight o'clock, Hilda called me up. I should not have thought of calling her so early, and her calling me at an hour when she was usually asleep made me very anxious. From the tone of her voice I knew she was at the boarding-house telephone, which was in the hall where she could be overheard, and I was troubled by the tremulousness that she seemed unable to keep out of her voice. She wondered, she said, if I didn't think it would be great fun to go for a walk in Central Park, and we could have breakfast somewhere afterward.

I agreed of course and arranged to meet her at the Park entrance in half an hour. I was glad enough to be given the chance of seeing her so soon, but her anxiety to see me made me very apprehensive. What had happened? What *could* have happened? I thought of a dozen things, probable and improbable. And when she kept me waiting for ten minutes, as she usually did, my apprehensions increased.

At last she arrived, and, as she gave me her hand, she looked into my face anxiously: "Oh, Dick," she whispered, "I haven't slept a wink all night. What happened?"

I heaved a sigh of relief before I replied. Evidently nothing had occurred to make matters any worse. She had wanted to see me simply to find out what had already occurred. There were dark shadows under her eyes from loss of sleep, but the cold had whipped her cheeks into a glow, and she was looking her usual self. We turned into the Park, and then I spoke.

"Why did you run off the way you did last night, Hilda—you and Miss Blair?" I asked.

"Oh, I'll explain that in a minute," she replied. "What happened, Dick? Was any one shot?"

I looked at her. It seemed grotesque to me that she should have to ask such a question, then I reflected that after all she couldn't have known what happened unless some one had told her, and apparently no one had, for I was sure her ignorance was not feigned.

"Why—yes," I answered. "Farnsworth was. He shot himself."

"Shot *himself!*" She stood still in her astonishment and stared at me.

"He's dead," said I.

"Oh, no!" she cried in horror. "No, Dick!"

I repeated Miller's story of the tragedy and told her what course he and Corliss and I had decided on, impressing upon her its importance to herself. The one doubtful factor, I added, was Miss Blair. I asked Hilda if she thought we could depend on Miss Blair to play the game with us.

"Oh, yes—oh, yes," she answered instantly. She seemed half stunned with horror by my news. That it had been news to her there could be no doubt.

"You'd better see her and explain everything," I continued; "and tell her how vital it is to all of us that we should all be on our guard every moment—she especially. There's been a lot of talk about her and Farnsworth, I understand, and it may come out that she was with him last night. Even if it doesn't she may be questioned by the police, and——"

"The police!" She stopped again in her tracks.

"Of course," I said. "The person who finds the body—the butler probably—will notify the police, and they will notify the medical examiner's office, and there will be an examination of the body and doubtless a police investigation."

"But you said he killed himself!"

"The police won't know that. They won't know anything except that he's dead, and that he was found with a revolver on the floor beside him and a

bullet in his body. They won't know whether he shot himself, or was shot by another person, and they will, of course, try to find out. They'll want to know why he killed himself, if he did, and exactly when, and what he had been doing, and how he had been behaving, and who had seen him during the evening, and if he was alone when he shot himself, or if any one was in the house with him. Don't you see?"

She made no reply. We had walked on again, and she was staring straight ahead of her.

"They'll be almost certain to hear about his—his friendship with Miss Blair," I went on. "And if they do they will certainly question her about when she saw him last and so on. So you see, don't you, how very important for all of us it is that she should be on her guard. Perhaps I'd better see her, myself, and——"

"No, no—I'll tell her," Hilda broke in. "I'll tell her everything you've said. She'll be careful, I'm sure she will. But I'd better go there right away. They might get there before I do. I must hurry."

She was for turning and leaving the Park at once, but I reassured her. The butler would probably inform Farnsworth's people, and they would inform the police after they had looked into the case themselves. The chances were they'd get their doctor, and he'd notify the police, and all that would take time.

"When did you leave there last night, Hilda?" I asked then.

"Why—when Bernice came downstairs," she answered.

"When was that?"

"After you went up—after we heard the shots."

"How long after?"

"I don't know—just a little while. She heard the voices in the reception room and asked me what was the matter, and I told her about the shots, and——"

"Hadn't she heard them?"

"No, she said she hadn't."

"Where was she?"

"Upstairs—fixing her hair."

"In that back bedroom?"

"Yes—his room."

"But that room is directly over the reception room," I said. "She must have heard the shots."

Hilda was silent.

"Mustn't she?" I asked.

"I don't see why she needed to hear them if she was busy with her hair."

"She couldn't have been so busy that she wouldn't have noticed shots directly under her, in a quiet back room, at that time of the night," I argued.

Again Hilda was silent.

"She must have heard them," I repeated.

"She didn't. She didn't know there had been any until I told her. All she knew was that there was a stranger in the reception room talking to you and Mr. Corliss. She heard the voices on her way downstairs. And she asked me what you were all in that room for. When I told her about the shots she said we'd better go, because Mr. Farnsworth had been drinking, and something might have happened, and we didn't want to be mixed up in it. And then we couldn't find our coats and had to hunt them. They were in the dining room. And we put them on and slipped out and walked a long way and picked up a taxi in front of a hotel, and she took me home. And that's all I know. And please don't ask me any more questions. My head aches awfully. I didn't sleep all night, I was so worried, not knowing what had happened—or anything. That's why I called you up so early."

For a minute or two we walked on in silence. It seemed to me incredible that Miss Blair had not heard the shots if, as she claimed, she was in the room directly above. But I saw it was no

use discussing the point with Hilda. Besides, it was of no special importance, so far as I could see. What mattered was that Miss Blair should stand with us in our effort to keep out of the mess, and, according to Hilda, we could safely count on her. But even with her cooperation the case looked pretty hopeless to me. There would certainly be an investigation, and it would arrive very promptly, I feared, at Bernice Blair.

What we should have done, I saw now, was to accept Arnold Miller's offer to call the police and declare that he had been alone in the house with Ripley Farnsworth at the time of the shooting. That would have given the police some definite data. Enough to satisfy them, perhaps. For Miller's statement would have supplied a motive for the suicide—insanity—and Miller's wounded shoulder would have accounted for the bullet hole in the wall. There would have been no reason for doubting his assertion that he and Farnsworth had been alone in the house, except for the servant, and if the dead man's association with Bernice Blair had come to the knowledge of the police, they would have attached no significance to it. Even if they had found out that others besides Miller had been at the Farnsworth house late that night, they would have had Miller's word for it that, if others had been there before him, they were not there when he arrived. The whole affair would have narrowed down to Miller and Farnsworth and their relationship.

Why had I not seen all that last night? It was clear enough now. And Miller had offered to take exactly that course. If Corliss and I had had any sense we would have accepted the offer of escape and left the rest to him. Well, too late for that now. We had made our choice and would have to abide by it. But there was one thing I could do—see Miss Blair, myself, and make sure that she could be relied on as fully as Hilda believed.

This decision reached I turned to Hilda, and at that moment she began to talk.

"I'm terribly sorry, Dick," she said in a mournful tone, "to have got you into this dreadful affair. I know you didn't want to go with them last night. I didn't, either. But I had to go. Bernice begged me to. She was afraid to go alone with him. He'd been drinking, you know, and—well, she was afraid to go alone with him, and that's why I went."

"Why did she have to go?" I asked.

"Because she was afraid not to."

"Afraid not to?" I echoed. "What do you mean, Hilda?"

"Why—he had threatened to kill her, Dick."

"Kill her!" It was now my turn to stop and stare.

"He was crazy—sort of—she said." Hilda spoke falteringly. "Bernice was trying to drop him—he drank so, you know, and—he was married anyhow, and she was planning to go to London and get into one of the musical shows over there, and, when she told him, he got furious and said he wasn't going to be thrown down by any more women, that he'd had enough of that—he meant his wife, you see—she'd left him—and he told Bernice if she didn't stick to him, he'd kill her. And she was afraid he meant it. She didn't know what he might do when he was drunk. And he was drunk last night, you could tell it, and so she begged me to get you to go with them and make a party of it. And she's been so lovely to me I couldn't refuse, Dick. But I'm sorry it turned out this way. You haven't said anything, but I know how you feel."

"What I feel, Hilda, is all on your account," I answered very earnestly. "I guessed why we went with them last night—I mean, I guessed that she had made a point of your going, and that

you felt you couldn't refuse because you were under obligations to her for getting you your job and all that. And what's done can't be undone. We've got to face the music now, and it may be pretty unpleasant music, as I have already explained. You can't touch pitch without getting black, you know."

That was just another way of saying I had told her so, and I had not meant to say anything of the kind, but my recent reflections on the situation had not improved my temper.

She flared up at once, as I might have expected.

"I shall stand by Bernice no matter what happens," she declared.

"You'll probably have to," I retorted, adding: "I suppose you have known all along that he was a married man."

"Yes, but I didn't think it was any of my business," she replied. "Oh, I know how you feel, Dick, but he wasn't living with his wife."

"Because of Miss Blair."

"No, it wasn't. That's not true, Dick. He wasn't living with her when he first met Bernice. She had only married him for his money—he told Bernice so—and he had been crazy about her, and when he found out she didn't care for him he started drinking, and she left him. It wasn't on account of Bernice at all."

"Well," I said wearily, "it doesn't make much difference now. But I'll tell you what we are going to do. We're going down to see Miss Blair and talk the situation over. I've got to make sure that she understands just how things stand."

"She won't be up yet," said Hilda, plainly not liking the idea.

"Then she can get up," I returned curtly.

"I'd better see her first."

"We'll go together. It's of vital importance to our plan that she understands it, and I want to see for myself that she does."

She made no further objection, and we turned and made our way out of the Park, but not before she had told me over and over that she was going to stand by Bernice under any and all circumstances, that she had learned from her stage experience that a woman may be good without being virtuous, and virtuous without being good, and that in her opinion Farnsworth's wife, who had married him for money, was not worthy to touch the hem of Bernice's garment, or words to that effect.

I let her talk. There was no one to hear but myself. The Park was practically empty at that hour, it being Sunday and winter, and I thought it as well to let her relieve her nervousness by talking. The apartment hotel where Miss Blair lived was not far, and we walked there. I had never been to the place before, and I let Hilda lead the way. That is to say, I did not pay much attention to where we were going. Hilda had stopped talking when we emerged from the Park, and I was silent, too, thinking again.

Suddenly Hilda stopped, just as she had stopped several times in the Park when startled by an announcement of mine. I looked around at her, stopping, too, then automatically followed her glance and saw a dark-clad woman's figure disappearing into a taxicab standing at the curb about a hundred feet ahead of us.

"What's the matter?" I asked, turning back to Hilda.

"I believe we're in the wrong street," she replied, looking vaguely about.

"No, we're not," I returned. "I noticed the street number at the corner."

"Did you?" she murmured, gazing ahead again. A negro boy in livery was putting a suit case into the taxicab with the woman, and the next moment the cab started off.

"I'm sure it's the right street," I said.

"Oh, yes," said Hilda then. "I see

it is now. I've never come from this direction before. It didn't look familiar."

We walked on. The taxicab turned the corner, and the porter darted across the sidewalk and into the building from which he had come. There were a few pedestrians in the block besides ourselves, but no other signs of life. The peace and quiet of Sunday were about us, if not in us.

Presently Hilda turned in at the entrance of the building into which the negro had disappeared. I saw that it was the same building, but that there was anything odd in the coincidence did not occur to me. The porter was at the door and opened it for us. We went to the desk, and Hilda asked to be announced to Miss Blair.

"Miss Blair?" repeated the clerk. "She's gone away."

"She jes' this minute lef'," put in the porter. "You-all mus' a seen her, didn't you—gettin' in a taxi?"

I looked at Hilda, but she avoided my glance. "Where has she gone?" she asked the clerk in a queer, faltering voice.

"Why—she didn't say. Did she, Jim?" The clerk appeared to know Hilda and was willing to give her all the information at his command.

The porter shook his head. "She jes' gone fo' Sunday, I reckon," he answered. "You-all mus' a seen her. I seen you-all comin' up the street when I was carryin' her suit case out."

Hilda murmured some words of thanks, and we went out. I waited for her to speak, to explain, but she said nothing whatever. Her face had a strange expression that I could not interpret. I felt sure she had recognized Miss Blair, though I had not, never having seen her except in evening dress. But why had Hilda acted as she had in the matter? Why had she pretended she thought she was in the wrong street when she must have known she was not? To give her friend time to get away? So that I wouldn't have a chance to talk to her?

"What's the big idea, Hilda?" I said finally when she showed no likelihood of volunteering an explanation.

"What?"

"What's the idea?" I repeated.

"I don't know what you're talking about," she answered.

"Yes, you do. Where's Miss Blair gone?"

"I don't know. How should I? I haven't seen her since last night." Her voice took on its defiant, stubborn tone.

"No, but you saw her this morning getting into that taxi. I saw you looking at her. Why didn't you say so?"

"I didn't see who it was."

"Yes, you did."

"I didn't, I tell you."

"There's no use saying that, Hilda," I said sternly. "I want the truth. Where has Miss Blair gone?"

"How should I know?"

"What has she gone away for?"

"I don't know that, either. I don't know anything about it."

"You know more than you have told me, I'm sure of that."

"I don't know anything. She has a right to go away if she wants to, hasn't she? Why should you be so suspicious about it?"

"Suspicious?" The word startled me.

"Well, you are, aren't you?" she returned. "Asking so many questions."

"I wasn't suspicious," I answered, "but I'm beginning to be. You saw Miss Blair, and you know why she's gone away. You know something about all this that you haven't told me. What is it? Why did you and she run off the way you did last night? What has she to do with what happened?"

Hilda began to tremble and then suddenly to sob. She took out her handkerchief and wiped her eyes.

"What are you crying for?" I demanded.

"Because you're such a brute!" she answered. "I told you I didn't close my eyes last night and my head aches, but you don't care, of course."

"You're not crying because your head aches," I retorted coldly. "You're crying because you don't want to answer my questions about Miss Blair."

"I'm not."

This was childish. We were getting nowhere. "It's you I'm thinking of in all this, Hilda—you must know that."

"Well—you ought to be glad she's gone. Now she can't tell anything, can she?"

"If you think she's improved matters by running away——"

"She hasn't run away."

"All right—all right." I was irritated. "I'll take you home, and you'd better go to bed and sleep. When your headache is better perhaps you'll let me talk to you."

I took her to her boarding house and then went home myself. Miss Blair's unexpected departure might not mean anything, I thought, and then again it might, and I was inclined to the latter view. For I was convinced in my own mind that Hilda was keeping something from me. What it was I could only imagine.

CHAPTER V.

AN INTERVIEW.

THAT Sunday was the longest day of my young life. I made two professional calls in the morning, and in the afternoon I called on Hilda. But she was out, the maid told me, and had left no word for any one as to where she had gone.

I returned home to the society of my own thoughts, which were becoming less and less agreeable. Nothing is so intolerable as suspense, and those endless hours of uncertainty and apprehension were almost maddening. If only Hilda had seen me when I called—I didn't believe she was out. If only she had been frank with me. What could she know that she wouldn't tell me? Miss Blair had had nothing to do with Farnsworth's death, that was certain, because Miller had not even known she was in the house. She might, to be sure, have gone away just to escape becoming involved in the case. But what harm would it do *her* to have it known that she was in the house, with several other persons, at the time Farnsworth shot himself? She had objected very little, apparently, to having her name linked with his before his death. Of course she might have gone away for some reason not at all connected with the case. But, if so, why had Hilda behaved so queerly about her going?

Hilda knew something. To that conviction I returned as to a fixed point, after following first one and then another futile train of speculation. And so troubled was I by it that I finally made up my mind to talk plainly to Miller, when he came to have his wound dressed, and see if I could not bring him around to my conclusion that the best thing for every one concerned, including himself, was for him to go to the police and tell them exactly what had happened between himself and Farnsworth, declaring at the same time that there had been no one else in the house. That, I was sure, was the one wise course to pursue.

As it turned out Miller did not come to me. He telephoned about four, asking me to come to him, as he thought he had fever and had better not go out. I went at once, only too glad to do so, and found him in a dressing gown walking the floor. His rooms were in a small, very unpretentious bachelor apartment house and were very simply furnished. There was about them nothing of the luxurious elegance of the Farnsworth house. He was evidently not in his friend's class financially.

When I arrived he was walking the floor, as I have said. I could hear him from outside and stood a moment or two at the door listening to his restless pacing, before I rang. He came to the door instantly, and when I saw him I was shocked at the change in his appearance. He was hollow-eyed and haggard, and looked as if he had been through a long illness.

Such a startling change could not have resulted from the wound in his shoulder, of course, and for that reason I made no comment on it. He thanked me for coming, and I at once set about dressing his shoulder, which I found in a satisfactory condition. He had a slight temperature, I found, but nothing to worry about.

"Get any sleep?" I asked him, just to hear what he would say. I was sure he had not slept at all.

"Oh, yes," he answered, "slept all right."

I was putting back into my bag the gauze and other things that I had brought when it occurred to me that I might as well leave them in case I had to come again.

"Think you'll be able to get over to my office to-morrow?" I asked as I paused.

He had risen and walked to the window. "I hardly think so," he replied. "I feel all in somehow—the shock, I suppose. I'd rather you'd come here, if you don't mind."

"Not at all," said I. "Then I'll just leave these things." I placed the things on the table, wondering just how to come to the point I had in mind. I had expected that he would say something about the night before which would give me my opportunity, but it did not look as if he had any such intention, and so when I had closed my bag I decided to speak.

"Heard anything?" I asked.

At once he turned from the window, and I realized then that he had been waiting for me to open the subject. "No," he said, "but I've been thinking things over, and—well, there are some things I want to ask you."

"What things?" said I when he paused.

"Why, a number of things that it didn't occur to me to ask about last night."

"Well?" I said when he stopped again, and I wondered why he hesitated.

He came over to the table at which I was standing and took up the cotton and adhesive plaster and other articles that I had placed there and carried them to the chiffonier and dumped them in a drawer. Then, as he closed the drawer, he spoke.

"Just where were you all last night when the thing happened?" he asked.

"Why, you know that," I answered. "Corliss and I were in the dining room, Miss Blair was upstairs, and Miss Murray——"

"Where upstairs?" he said, interrupting me.

"Miss Blair?"

"Yes, where was *she?*"

"In one of the bedrooms, doing her hair. They had been dancing, she and Farnsworth, and her hair had become untidy, and she and Miss Murray went upstairs, while we men went down to the dining room. But," I went on, "I think I told you this last night. I remember distinctly saying that he had probably drawn the curtains at the door because he knew the girls would be coming downstairs in a little while."

Miller nodded. "I remember," he said, "and just *when* did they come down? They didn't come together, if I remember."

"No," I said. "Miss Murray was downstairs when she heard the shots. She was standing in the lower hall near the stairs."

"Are you *sure?*"

"Sure?" I stared, taken aback by the question.

"How do you *know* she was downstairs at the time?" he asked.

"Why, she said so."

"Oh, she *said* so!"

"Yes, and, besides, she was there when I opened the dining-room door, which was almost immediately after hearing the shots."

"Oh, then you *saw* her there?"

"Yes, I *saw* her." Unconsciously I stressed the word, too, and my tone must have been indignant, for he hastened to reassure me as to his purpose in questioning me so closely.

"Please don't misunderstand me," he said. "I don't doubt your word or hers. I'm merely trying to get the facts clearly. I've been thinking things over, and I found there were a number of points that I was not clear about. So Miss Murray was on the *ground floor* when she shots were fired, that's certain?"

"Quite certain," said I, but I wished I had had the foresight to interrogate Hilda more in detail that morning.

"And Miss Blair was where?"

I hesitated. It suddenly dawned upon me that I did not know where Miss Blair was at the time in question. I knew only what I had been told by Hilda, and Hilda probably knew only what she had been told by Miss Blair.

"Oh, I don't *know* anything about Miss Blair's movements, after she and Miss Murray went upstairs," I answered. "That was the last I saw of her. But I saw Miss Murray this morning, and she said Miss Blair was on the third floor, when the shots were fired, and didn't hear them."

I was painfully conscious as I made that statement that it was going to strike Miller exactly as it had me, and I wished after the words were out that I had had the wit not to utter them—about Miss Blair not hearing the shots, I mean. But I couldn't unsay them, so I hurried on to Hilda's account of how Miss Blair had come downstairs, while we three men were in the reception room, and how and why she and Hilda had left at once and without ceremony.

"That's all I know about Miss Blair," I said in conclusion.

"I see," said Miller. "She claims not to have heard the shots, you say?" Of course he had seized on that point first.

"That's what she told Miss Murray," said I.

"And which room does she claim to have been in at the time?"

"The back room."

"Directly above?"

I let that pass. No reply was necessary, I thought, and Miller turned away and walked back to the window. When he reached it he looked around at me.

"How did it happen, doctor," he said, "that Miss Murray came downstairs ahead of Miss Blair, if, as you say, she was *waiting* for her when she heard the shots? You did say that, didn't you?"

I nodded. I was beginning to hate his habit of stressing words, though there was nothing offensive in the way he did it. It was simply an expression of his intense earnestness, I knew.

"Miss Blair was doing her hair over," I said, "and Miss Murray wasn't. There was no reason why she should wait for Miss Blair, and——"

"But she *did* wait, you know, downstairs."

"Well, after she got down she probably decided she'd rather wait—that's all. I see nothing strange about that."

"No," he conceded, "if that's the explanation she gives."

"I haven't discussed the point with her," I said. "It didn't occur to me that it was important, and I don't see *now* what difference it makes, nor what difference it makes *where* Miss Blair was when the shots were fired, or whether or not she heard them. Why should she say she *didn't*, if she *did?*"

I did a little emphasizing myself in that speech, I remember. It rather relieved my feelings. But his response took me aback.

"That's just what I'd like to know," he answered quietly. "If she was upstairs in that back room, or if she was anywhere else between that room and the dining room, she *must* have heard the shots. Either she was somewhere else, or she *did* hear the shots. And where else *could* she have been?"

"I've told you all I know," I said. "And I still don't see what difference it makes where she was." I did see—or thought I did—but I wanted to hear what he would say.

But he let the remark go unanswered. "Have you seen her to-day?" he asked.

"No," I said. "I saw Miss Murray early this morning. I thought it important to let her know what had happened, and what we had decided to do in the matter. And," I continued, "I've been thinking things over, too, since I saw you last night. It's my opinion that we used bad judgment in letting Corliss persuade us to his plan. We should have done what you suggested. Don't you think so yourself now?"

He looked hard at me, as if not understanding.

"The truth is bound to come out, and it would certainly be better for you to tell it yourself than to have it discovered indirectly," I added.

Shaking his head he turned away. "It's too late for that now," he said. "We'll have to go on as we've started."

I hesitated, tempted to tell him of Miss Blair's going away, but I decided not to. I was not sure that it had any connection with the previous night's events, and the thought struck me that he probably knew she had gone, that that was what had started him wondering about her. Anyhow I did not bring up the subject, and, as he began to talk about his wound, I took the hint and left. He looked so haggard and unhappy that I shrank from adding anything to his worries.

However he had added considerably to mine. I could think of only one reason why he should have questioned me so closely about the exact whereabouts of Hilda and Miss Blair at the time of the shooting, which was that he was afraid that one of the girls, or both, had been in the hall outside the reception room and had heard more than the shots. I had not forgotten that he had failed to tell me the night before just what it was he had said that had so angered Farnsworth, and I thought it not unlikely that that was what he was afraid Hilda or Miss Blair had overheard.

Obviously he was terribly worried about something. But what? And why was it too late now for him to go to the police and tell the truth? He had been willing to do it last night. Now he was not. Because of what he thought the girls might know? Hilda certainly knew *something!*

I was at sea, I must admit, at that stage of the case, and I was walking along mulling the thing over when a boy came around the corner shouting about something, in the indistinct way newsboys have. Under his arm was a pack of pink papers, and I hastened to buy one. It was the Sunday edition of the *Evening Announcer,* which I had entirely forgotten about, because I so rarely bought it, never having found anything in it but a rehash of the morning news.

Glancing at the headlines I saw first a full-page spread about a fire in Brooklyn, in which somebody had lost his life—the sensation the boy had been shouting about—and then, among several column headings of equal prominence I found the announcement of Farnsworth's death.

"Ripley Farnsworth a Suicide," I read, and below it: "Young Millionaire Found Dead In His Home Early

This Morning." The account that followed I cannot quote exactly, but it is not necessary to do so. It told first of the butler's finding the body on the floor in the reception room, of the pistol at his side, and of the whisky bottle and glass on the mantel. The butler claimed to have heard no shot the night before and to know nothing that threw light on the tragedy. Young Farnsworth was living alone in the house, his wife having left him to return to her mother's home because of his erratic behavior, and she was said to be of the opinion that he had ended his life in a fit of insanity, induced by heavy drinking. The account concluded with a brief statement of Farnsworth's parentage, his wealth, and social importance, together with a similar statement about his wife.

That was all. Nothing whatever to indicate that there was to be an investigation by the police, or that anybody suspected that things might not be quite what they seemed. The fact that no mention was made of the bullet hole in the wall troubled me a little, but I knew that newspaper accounts are rarely accurate, and I felt that the important thing was that the affair appeared to have been taken so unquestioningly as suicide.

My fears were considerably allayed, and I had a good night's sleep. And on the principle that worry never does any good, it was well that I did sleep. If I could have seen the headlines that were being prepared for the morning papers I should have had a very bad night indeed.

CHAPTER VI.

HEADLINES.

THE startling words that greeted me, as I opened my morning paper, were: "Ripley Farnsworth Mysteriously Shot. Police Investigating Suspicious Circumstances Surrounding Death of Popular Clubman."

Anxiously I read on. The first paragraph or two described the finding of the body, the summoning of the police, and the general aspects of the case which had given it at first the appearance of suicide. The rest of the account I give verbatim from the newspaper clipping which I preserved.

"There were, however, certain circumstances connected with the case that led the police to make a thorough investigation, and several facts have been brought to light which render the suicide theory untenable. The first suspicious circumstance noted by the investigators was a bullet hole in the wall of the room where the body was found, about five feet above the floor and halfway between the mantel and a cabinet standing against the wall. The hole, so the butler declares, was not there on the previous day. He is sure, he says, that if it had been, he would have noticed it when cleaning the room during the afternoon. And his contention is born out by the appearance of the hole, which looks perfectly fresh. The point is extremely important, in the opinion of the police, because an examination of the revolver found beside young Farnsworth's dead body showed that it had only been fired once. There must therefore have been another weapon, and consequently another person involved in the tragedy."

I remember, as if it had been yesterday, the feeling that came over me when I read that last line just quoted. Consternation expresses it better than any one word I can think of. I was astounded and confounded. The earth seemed slipping from under my feet. If that thing was true, if that revolver on the floor by Farnsworth had only been fired once, then——

But I didn't stop to think the thing out. I read on.

"Another thing that seemed to call for inquiry was the fact that in the dining room plates of sandwiches were

found on the sideboard, together with some cake and fruit and several plates and napkins, evidently preparations for a party, and made, the butler states, by himself at Farnsworth's orders. Nothing had been touched, however, and whether the expected guests did not arrive at all, or whether the death of their host interrupted the party before refreshments were reached, is still a mystery. The butler professes utter ignorance as to the identity of any of the guests expected. He heard nothing, he claims, after he went upstairs to bed at ten o'clock, and he had no idea that all was not as usual in the house until he went downstairs at seven the next morning and found the door of Farnsworth's bedroom open, the lights on, the room empty, and the bed undisturbed. Weston, the butler, is rather deaf, and it may be that that fact accounts for his not hearing the shot, or shots, and other sounds on the lower floors.

"The suspicions of the police, already aroused by the circumstances stated, were more than justified by the findings of the medical examiner. An autopsy was made yesterday afternoon, and when the bullet that had caused Farnsworth's death was extracted and examined, it was found to be a thirty-two, whereas the revolver found at his side was a thirty-eight."

This second surprise, even more startling and ominous than the first, had less effect on me, for by that time I was too stunned to feel a shock. My moorings were gone; I didn't know where I was, or where I was going. I read on, expecting even worse disclosures, and I was not disappointed.

"The revolver has been identified by both the butler and Mrs. Farnsworth as the property of Farnsworth, owned by him for several years. Mrs. Farnsworth was able, she said, to make a positive identification because of several scratches on the barrel of the weapon which she remembered. Her husband, she said, had had the pistol ever since she had known him, and she had seen it and examined it closely several times. There was no doubt whatever, she said, that the weapon found at his side was his own, but as to who might have handled the weapon with which he had been shot, the thirty-two, she had no idea. She had not, she said, seen her husband or heard from him for two months. They had agreed to live apart at that time and had not since communicated with each other in any way.

"Asked for the reason for their separation, Mrs. Farnsworth said her husband had behaved so irrationally at times that she had feared for her life, and when first informed of his death, supposed at that time to have been self-inflicted, she said she had feared that he would kill himself some day. When told of the later developments in the case, which contradicted so emphatically the theory of suicide, she said she could furnish no information that would aid the police in their investigation, as she was wholly ignorant of her husband's life during the past two months.

"Inquiries into Farnsworth's movements on the evening preceding his death have brought to light nothing that appears to have a bearing on the case. He dined at the Comus Club and went from there to the theater, according to statements made by several of the club employees, but which theater he went to, or at what hour he finally reached his home has not yet been learned. Inquiry was made among the taxicab drivers who are in the habit of serving the Comus Club, but none of those questioned recalled having had Farnsworth for a fare on Saturday evening. Several said he was not known to them by sight. It is hoped that when the case becomes known through the newspapers these points and others of equal importance may be cleared up by voluntary statements from those informed.

"It was learned at police headquarters that no steps had been taken as yet to recover the bullet that pierced the wall of the room in which the body of Farnsworth was found. It is expected, however, that that bullet will be taken out to ascertain its caliber. The wall will probably have to be partially demolished for the purpose.

"The members and employees of the firm of Farnsworth & Alden, investment bankers, of which the dead man was a junior partner, were interviewed, but could give no information of value to the police. Young Farnsworth, it was said, had inherited his place in the firm from his father and had for the last few months spent very little time in his office. Nothing apparently was known there of his private affairs or his personal friends."

I had read almost to the end of the printed statement and supposed I knew the worst, but, as my eye moved on to the last paragraph, the word "women" jumped into view, and my heart stopped beating, or seemed to, and my hands turned to ice.

"From a person living in the neighborhood of the Farnsworth home, and whose identity was not divulged, the authorities obtained a piece of information that may serve as a valuable clew to the solution of the mystery surrounding the case. Two young women, it is said, were seen leaving the Farnsworth house Saturday night shortly after twelve o'clock. They were alone, according to the person responsible for the story, and were in evening clothes, and went away on foot. The witness of their departure supposed them to be young women living in the neighborhood and attached no significance to the incident until hearing next day of Farnsworth's death. Who the young women were, is a question the answer to which, the police believe, will go far toward clearing up the case."

Well, I don't suppose it's necessary to dwell on my feelings or my thoughts when I had finished with that newspaper—or it had finished with me. Very little imagination should be needed to realize my state of mind that Monday morning. The fact is, that I didn't try to figure things out, because I knew without making the attempt that it couldn't be done. What would happen next I didn't know, but I knew that things would probably get very much worse before they got better. And all hope that we were going to be able to keep clear of the mess had gone glimmering. But, Lord, by that time the affair had become so serious that I felt as if we'd all be lucky not to land in the Tombs before we were through. Farnsworth had not shot himself, he had been shot, and I had figured in the pleasing rôle of accessory after the fact. *I'd* be lucky if I didn't land in Sing Sing.

The next thing that happened, I remember, was Corliss. I had been damning him right and left, as the cause of all our troubles, which I knew was unfair, because I had been only too ready to follow his lead. I had just finished my breakfast when he blew in, without telephoning or anything, and his fat young face was the map of the Land of Despair.

He did not beat about the bush, either. What he wanted he asked for, which was that, whatever might happen to the rest of us, he should be spared. It wouldn't do us any good, he argued passionately, to drag him in, and it would be the easiest thing in the world for us to leave him out. Nobody on earth but ourselves knew he had been there, and I knew he had had nothing to do with what had happened. Hadn't he been sitting in the dining room with me when the shots were fired?

Decidedly he was scared out of his boots, and all because of his wife, who must have been a tartar. I didn't know it at the time, but I learned later that she was not only a wife, but a house

and a monthly allowance as well, which explained his fear of losing her. He would have had to work for his living.

He wanted me to undertake to see the others in his behalf, and more to get rid of him than for any other reason I said I would speak to them if I got the chance. Then I asked what he thought of the morning news.

"Think of it?" he exclaimed. "There's only one thing to think. Just what I thought that night. I knew all the time that Miller shot Rip. But I thought he had shot himself, too—afterward, for a bluff of self-defense. It didn't go down with me, his having us search him. I thought the pistol on the floor was the one he had used of course. But his must have been in his overcoat. I remember he took it himself from the chair, when I started wiping the furniture. Afraid I'd feel the pistol in the pocket—of course."

"Do you mean to say," I demanded, "that you really thought *then* that Miller had shot Farnsworth? And you planned to hush it up—just to save yourself?"

"Of course I did." It was evident that he had no moral qualms on the subject. "What business of mine was it how the thing happened, as long as I didn't do it? I had a right to think of myself, didn't I?"

I saw it was no use pursuing that line of argument. "But Miller couldn't have done it," I said. "If he had he would have known that it was useless to try to make the thing pass as a suicide. He would have known that only one shot had been fired from Farnsworth's revolver, and that the bullet in Farnsworth's——"

He cut me off impatiently. "Oh, he knew all that, but, when he saw how keen we all were to keep out of the affair, he jumped at the chance it offered him to keep out, too. If he had been alone in the house, as he thought he was, he would have made things look all right before he left, you can gamble on that."

"How?" I asked curiously. The workings of Corliss' mind were wonderful to me.

"Why, easy enough. He could have fired off another shot somewhere—where the bullet wouldn't be seen—from Rip's revolver, I mean, and——"

"You're forgetting that if he shot Farnsworth he knew that the bullet in him wasn't a thirty-eight," I objected.

"Well, then he could have left his revolver instead of Rip's. Oh, he would have fixed it up some way, and with her to back him by telling the police Rip was crazy, and she had left him because she was in fear of her life, everything would have passed off all right. It was our butting in that spoiled his little plan. There was nothing left then but to take advantage of the loophole that I offered him, and he jumped at it. Now he's got us all in a mess, and he's counting on us having to save him in order to save ourselves."

"But why," I asked, "should Miller have shot Farnsworth?"

My companion shrugged his shoulders and made a queer face. "Well, in self-defense, maybe—I don't know as to that. I'll give him the benefit of the doubt, but if a man is in love with a woman, he's got a very good reason for killing her husband, hasn't he?"

I must have looked astonished and blank, for Corliss stared at me a moment and then said:

"Didn't you know? I thought everybody knew. She was in love with Miller when she married Rip. It was the money she wanted, of course, but she wanted Miller, too—after she had made sure of the coin. What she was after was a divorce and alimony—and Miller for her second husband. But Rip, they say, threatened to kill her if she entered suit for divorce. He had discovered that

she didn't care a fig for him, and it drove him to booze. He was crazy about her, I guess, poor devil. God knows a woman can make a man's life hell if she wants to—in more ways than one."

Corliss sighed, frowned, looked at his watch, and rose.

"I've got to keep out of this thing, doctor," he said for about the tenth time since his arrival. "A chorus girl is a red rag to my wife. I used to run with them a lot, and she knows it, and my life won't be worth living if she even gets wind of my being with those girls that night. And the girls will do their part to keep me out of trouble, I know—at least I'm sure that Bernice will. She's the best-hearted girl I ever knew—too kind-hearted for her own good. By the way, have you seen her since Saturday night?"

"No," I said. "Have you?"

"Lord, no," he answered. "I didn't dare. But I was just thinking she must be pretty cut up over Rip's death. She was awfully gone on him, you know. But I wonder"—he paused, frowning thoughtfully—"I wonder why she rushed off as she did that night."

I repeated Hilda's explanation of their abrupt exit.

"Too bad they were seen," he lamented. "Just let the police get on the scent of a woman in an affair like this, and they forget everything else. A dozen men might have been seen coming out of the house that night by a dozen different people, and it wouldn't have made a ripple at headquarters, but two women, young women in evening togs and alone, are seen, and everybody's excited about it. Isn't it true?"

It was most regrettably true, I agreed. I also agreed after further pressure to do what I could to save Corliss' skin, and he went away bearing what comfort he had been able to draw from my promises.

I disliked Corliss, but I would help him, if I could.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BOMB.

THE newspaper and my talk with Corliss had given me food for thought—very indigestible food, I might add. And, worse than that, it was food for thought, not action. If I could have thought of something that could be done to avert the danger hanging over our heads, it would not have been so bad. But I did not know what to do, nor, for that matter, what to think.

I have spoken lightly about our danger of landing in the Tombs, and the fact that I can speak lightly about it now shows that we never did land there. Nevertheless the situation was pretty serious. Farnsworth had not shot himself, he had been shot. That was a pretty staggering fact, I submit. And if Miller had not shot him, who had? Bernice Blair? According to Corliss she had been in love with him.

Miller, of course, might have done it. It was possible I was all wrong about him. But, somehow, I could not bring myself to believe it. Still, if it was true that he was in love with Farnsworth's wife—but was it true? I wouldn't have believed Corliss under oath.

Not that things would have been improved had I known who killed Farnsworth. What worried me was that I could not now see the slightest hope of keeping Hilda out of the mess. I had not had much hope before, now I had none. I wondered how she was feeling about that time and wished that I could see her, but I decided that it might be more prudent not to do so. If she needed me, I felt sure, she would come to me.

I went out and took a look at the other principal morning papers, but none of them contained any additional details of importance. Then I went about my own business, my calls on my private patients and my day's work at the clinic. Several times I called up my office to ask if

there had been any calls for me, thinking Hilda might have telephoned, but there had been no message of any kind from her.

I tried to make myself believe that no news was good news, but I got precious little comfort out of it, and then the afternoon papers came out.

Our forgotten taxicab chauffeur had turned up. It's impossible, of course, to make any one understand how we could all have overlooked him as we did, but the fact remains. It's one of those things that no writer could put in a story, because it's too improbable, but it happened. That's all I can say.

He had been to the police, our taxi driver had, and told them about the party of four that he had driven to the Farnsworth house on Saturday night after the theater. No special theater was mentioned, and no names were given, but it was pretty plain from what was said that the police knew the theater and probably a good deal more. The account in my paper read as follows:

"Eugene Moorehead, a taxicab driver, appeared at police headquarters this morning with a story that may prove a connecting link in the chain of evidence now being forged by the authorities to prove their theory that young Ripley Farnsworth, who was found dead in his home early yesterday morning by a servant, was shot by some other hand than his own. Moorehead's story is that on Saturday night about eleven-thirty he picked up a party of two young men and two girls at the stage door of a theater at which a very successful musical comedy is now running, and he took them, he says, to the Farnsworth house. One of the men, Moorehead believes, must have been Farnsworth, because after paying the cab fare he admitted the party to the house with a key.

"Who the other man and the two women in the case are is not as yet known at headquarters, or, so it was stated, but if the theater is known it should not be a difficult matter to identify the young women, who are evidently members of the theatrical company now playing there. And as they are doubtless the same two women who were seen leaving the Farnsworth house about half an hour later, they should be able to throw light on the mystery of their host's tragic death."

That it should be easy to identify "the women in the case" was only too true, and the next few hours were the worst ones that the death of Ripley Farnsworth caused me. They were the darkest before the dawn, but of course I did not know the dawn was so near.

When the time approached for my professional call on Arnold Miller I found myself dreading it and yet eager for it. Eager, because of the chance it offered to pick up information, and yet dreading our meeting because of what had come to light since our last one. He *must* say something about the disclosures in the morning papers; he could not ignore them to *me*. I half expected that he would telephone me not to come, or that when I got there I should not find him in, but as usual it was the unexpected that happened.

To begin with, as I was walking down the block in which he lived, I came face to face with Bernice Blair. I say "face to face," but she did not see me. Or, if she did, she gave no sign of it. And the next moment she walked into Miller's house. Astonished, I stopped for a moment, then passed the door and saw her standing near the switchboard. The operator was evidently announcing her to some one.

I decided to wait until she came out, for there could be no doubt, I thought, that she was calling on Miller, and I had no wish to embarrass them by an inopportune arrival. Nor did I want to become any more deeply involved in the business of their meeting than I was already.

She remained inside about a quarter

of an hour—a trifle less, in fact—and when she came out her eyes looked as if she had been weeping. I had a better view of her now, for I had taken my stand in the doorway of the next house, where she was unlikely to see me, and her face left me in no doubt that, like Miller, she had been living under severe mental stress. I had never liked her, as I think I have said before, but at that moment I sincerely pitied her. Regardless of what she had done or had not done, I was sorry for her then.

That she had not "disappeared," as I had thought she might have, was something to be thankful for, for it seemed to show that she had no cause to disappear. But that she had cause for anxiety and grief was plain, and when she had turned the corner and passed out of sight I remained a moment wondering what had passed between her and Miller. I was still wondering when I rang his bell a few minutes later.

He opened the door for me, murmured a welcome, and made some remark, which I have forgotten, about his shoulder. I examined the wound, dressed it, took his temperature—the same routine as on the previous afternoon—then, when my professional duties were completed, and I thought I was going to have to start the conversation on other topics, as I had been forced to do the day before, he launched his bomb.

I say bomb, because a bomb is the most unexpected and startling and unsettling thing I can think of. And he hurled his, so to speak, as bombs are usually hurled, without warning.

"The game is up, Chilton," he said abruptly and without preface of any kind, as I was clearing my throat to speak. "I'm going to tell the truth. I shot Farnsworth."

I was as astonished, I believe, as I should have been if I had never considered the possibility of his having shot Farnsworth. I looked at him, dumbstruck. He had been striding about the room as on the previous day and had suddenly brought up in front of me as he began to speak, his haggard face quite close to mine, his dark eyes meeting my eyes.

"You seem surprised," he went on, still facing me squarely. "But why should you be? You must have read the papers to-day. You must know that Farnsworth did not shoot himself. Who did you think shot him?"

He seemed to be waiting for an answer, and it flashed across my mind that perhaps he was trying to find out if, by any chance, I *knew* who had shot Farnsworth—knew, that is, that he had not. I stammered out something about newspapers not being very reliable in such cases.

"Oh, they're right this time," he replied. "It wasn't suicide. I shot him—in self-defense, of course—and I meant to tell the truth to the police that night. But when there seemed a chance of avoiding that necessity, of keeping clear of the whole thing, I was tempted and fell. I was too stunned by what had happened to think clearly. I hadn't noticed that his revolver was not the same size as mine, and somehow I overlooked the fact that it had only been fired once. It was rank stupidity on my part, of course. I should have told you and Corliss the truth, given you and the girls time to get out of the house, and called the police. That's what I should have done and would have done if my mind had been functioning properly."

When I said nothing, he turned and walked away from me. His remark about overlooking the fact that Farnsworth's pistol had been fired only once was proof to me that, for some reason not yet clear to me, he was lying. I had a very distinct recollection that the number of shots fired from that weapon had been a topic of discussion between himself and myself and Corliss, and that it had been obvious then that he believed

two shots had been fired from it, because it had not been until the discovery of the bullet hole in the wall, which accounted for the second shot, that he had agreed to try Corliss' plan. But I was too puzzled by the sudden change in his attitude to contradict him. I preferred to await developments.

"I owe you and the others an apology for having lost my head the other night," he resumed, turning back to me. "I didn't realize just what I might be letting you in for until I saw the afternoon papers. Your taxi driver has called our bluff. The police will have no difficulty in identifying Miss Blair as one of the women in Farnsworth's party, and then you and Miss Murray will be dragged into the case. The only thing to do is for me to go to the police and tell the truth. And that's what I'm going to do at once. And of course I shall say that I was alone in the house."

Certainly it seemed to me rather late to hope to impose such a statement on the police, but I did not say so. Perhaps, I thought, when they had heard Miller's story they might not consider it worth while to continue their investigation in other directions.

"There's only one point that bothers me," Miller went on. "This shoulder of mine. It's proof that I shot in self-defense and explains the bullet hole in the wall; so I can't conceal it. But I shall be asked who's looking after it, and I wondered if you would mind twisting the truth a little and saying that I went to your office that night to have it dressed? You can say I told you I had had an accident; that will let you out. Fortunately your office is near enough to this place to make it seem plausible for me to have gone there."

Well, we talked it over, and when I left we had agreed on a story. I didn't like the idea, but it was the price I had to pay for Hilda's security.

Somehow I could not divest my mind of the belief that in saying he had shot Farnsworth, Miller was not telling the truth. Yet what other plausible explanation of the case was there? That was certainly the only one I could think of that accounted for all the facts. Miller's reason for confessing was plain enough, I thought. Bernice Blair had forced him to do so. She had overheard something that passed between him and Farnsworth before the shooting and had threatened to disclose it unless he took steps to prevent her presence in the house that night from becoming known.

That much, at least, I felt sure of. And, as usual, I was wrong.

CHAPTER VIII.

HILDA REAPPEARS.

NOT unexpected was a visit from the police, a visit which passed without mishaps. To my relief I gathered that I had no interest for them except as the physician who had dressed Miller's wound, and the care they took to frame their questions, so that I should not surmise the trend of them, would have amused me had I been in the mood to be amused by anything. I was closely interrogated as to the exact time of Miller's call at my office on Saturday night, and as to whether or not I had extracted a bullet from his shoulder, and fortunately no departure from the strict truth was required to meet the needs of the situation. In fact I did not so much distort the truth on that occasion as conceal it.

Hilda I had not seen all day nor heard from, and now I did not dare to try to see her because of my new and public status in the case. But I felt sure that she had heard from Miss Blair of the turn in events and would be prepared for it. An anxious inquiry came from Corliss over the telephone, cautiously worded, and I merely replied that all was going well, leaving him to make of the message whatever he liked.

As may be imagined, I opened my newspaper on Tuesday morning with great interest, not to say anxiety. Miller's name loomed large over a double-column article on the first page, but I was, of course, prepared for that. What I was not prepared for was the name of Bernice Blair, also, in conspicuous type.

"Farnsworth Death Bullet Fired by Arnold Miller. Story Confirmed by Bernice Blair, Actress Friend of Dead Man."

In astonishment I read what followed.

"A new and surprising development occurred yesterday afternoon in the investigation of the death of Ripley Farnsworth, when Bernice Blair, an actress now appearing in the musical comedy, "Step Lively," informed the police authorities that Farnsworth had been shot by an intimate friend of his in self-defense, and that she had been an eye-witness of the tragedy. The friend of Farnsworth, whom Miss Blair named as his slayer, is Arnold Miller, a lawyer, connected with the law firm of Hayes, Harland & Miller. Miller admits the truth of the statement made by the actress, and was, it appears, on his way to make a voluntary statement to the police when they called him on the telephone.

"According to Miller's account he called at the Farnsworth house at twelve o'clock Saturday night by appointment to discuss a matter of private business with his friend. He had hoped to see Farnsworth earlier in the evening, he says, but Farnsworth had a theater engagement, and so the later hour was agreed upon. When he arrived at the house, Miller states, he was admitted by Farnsworth himself and they went upstairs to a reception room at the rear of the second floor. Miller noted, he says, that Farnsworth had been drinking and was not himself, but he said nothing about it and began at once to talk about the business that had brought him. Suddenly, he claims, Farnsworth—for no apparent reason—became angry and ordered him to leave the house, and when he did not do so immediately, Farnsworth drew a revolver from his pocket and fired, the bullet piercing Miller's shoulder and burying itself in the wall behind him. Forced to defend his life, Miller drew his own revolver, he declares, and, as Farnsworth was about to fire a second time, he shot him. Farnsworth dropped to the floor, and when Miller rushed to him he discovered to his horror that his friend was dead.

"Miller's first impulse, he says, was to summon the police at once, but as nothing could be done for Farnsworth, and he was himself in bad need of medical attention he decided to go to a doctor and notify the police afterward. Accordingly, he says, he went to the office of Doctor Richard Chilton of East 80th Street, who dressed his wound. He told the physician, he says, that he had met with an accident. As he was very weak from loss of blood he was advised by the doctor to go home and to bed, which he did, intending, he declares, to notify the police in the morning. But when he went to the Farnsworth house next morning he found that the police were already in charge, and that they were of the opinion that the case was one of suicide. That had led him, he says, to hope that the truth might remain unknown, but later developments had made it necessary to speak out, and he had accordingly done so, as he did not wish to involve any innocent person in the unfortunate affair.

"Told of Miss Blair's statement, Miller declared that he had not known of her presence in the house, but had supposed himself to be alone with Farnsworth. He had not even known that there was a servant upstairs, he says.

"Miss Blair's statement confirms Miller's claim that Farnsworth was shot in self-defense. Her story is that Farnsworth called for her at the theater after the performance, and they were driven

to his house in a taxicab. There was no one else with them, she asserts, and denies emphatically the story of the chauffeur, Eugene Moorehead, that he drove a party of four from the stage door of the Manhattan Theater to the Farnsworth house. She and Farnsworth, she says, were in the reception room on the second floor when the bell rang, and he asked her to go upstairs until the caller he expected had gone. She did so, she says, but came down a few minutes later on hearing Farnsworth talking in a loud and angry tone.

"She was prompted not by curiosity, she says, but anxiety, as she knew that Farnsworth had been drinking heavily and was not accountable for what he did. She went to the curtained doorway of the reception room and looked in and saw Farnsworth draw his revolver and fire it at Miller. Miller recoiled, she says, and then recovered himself and pulled out a pistol and fired, just as Farnsworth raised his revolver to fire again. Farnsworth fell instantly, and at that, the actress claims, she was so frightened that she ran upstairs, not wishing to become involved in such an affair. She waited there until she heard Miller go downstairs and out of the house, then she slipped out, walked a few blocks, picked up a cab, and went home.

"Mrs. Farnsworth, the widow of the dead man, when told of the statements of Miss Blair and Miller, said she had no reason to doubt that they were true. Her husband, she declared, had several times threatened her life, making it impossible for her to continue to live in the house with him, and she had warned Miller, she said, that Farnsworth was not normal mentally, and therefore to be on his guard when with him. Miller, she said, had been for years a close friend of her husband and was also his lawyer, and she had for that reason appealed to him when Farnsworth had refused to provide for her after she had left him. It was to try to induce her husband to make suitable provision for her, Mrs. Farnsworth said, that Miller had gone to see him, and that had she known of their late appointment for Saturday night she would have tried to prevent it, as she knew from her own experience that her husband was usually most irritable at night, especially if he had been drinking."

I don't know whether it was the tone of the above report of Mrs. Farnsworth's remarks, or the remarks themselves, or what Corliss had told me about Mrs. Farnsworth and Miller being in love with each other that made the widow's comment so—well, unwidowly. But it did seem to me that she could have endorsed Miller's plea of self-defense without such an exposure of her dead husband's weaknesses. However, I tried to give her the benefit of the doubt by remembering Bernice Blair. It could not have been very gratifying to Mrs. Farnsworth, I reflected, to have her husband's interest in another woman revealed to the world, nor have put her in a charitable mood toward him even when dead.

The newspaper went on to quote me in corroboration of Miller's claim of having come to my office that night, and there was something, too, about the police intending to get the bullet out of the wall to see if it fitted Farnsworth's revolver, and Miller was further quoted as saying that he had gone armed to his meeting with Farnsworth because of what he had been told about the latter's mental condition—told by the latter's wife, I suppose, although the paper did not say so.

For my part I did not believe Miller had shot Farnsworth. If he had he would have had the revolver in his hand, or on his person, when I found him standing over Farnsworth's dead body. His start at my appearance was proof that he believed himself to be alone in the house, and that being the case, why

should he have immediately hidden his pistol?

My guess as to what had passed between Miller and Miss Blair the afternoon before, had turned out a bad one. My notion that she had forced Miller to speak in order to keep out of the case herself was plainly wrong. But just what was behind their statements to the police I could only imagine. Had she shot Farnsworth, and was he shielding her as the price of her silence about something she had overheard between him and Farnsworth? Or were they telling the truth, and had she forced him to speak merely by telling him she was going to do so, having the sense to see that their story would carry more conviction told now than later. That was certainly the most plausible explanation, but somehow I could not accept it. I could not believe that Miller had shot Farnsworth.

About ten o'clock that morning Hilda blew into my office. Her eyes were shining, and she looked positively radiant. She simply had to see me, she announced. Had I read the papers? Wasn't it all perfectly thrilling? And wasn't Bernice just too wonderful for anything?

Asked to interpret these cryptic utterances for me, she said Bernice had simply shouldered the whole thing herself to save the rest of us from a lot of dreadful notoriety. Because that horrid old taxicab driver had recognized her and had told the police, and she knew right away it wouldn't do a bit of good for her to say *she* hadn't been in the taxi with Farnsworth, but she could say there was no one else with them, and nobody could prove there was. And of course she had admitted that she was in the house that night she had to tell the rest. And she would have, anyhow, for Miller's sake, because otherwise the police might have thought he shot Farnsworth on purpose, because everybody knew he was in love with Mrs. Farnsworth, and that they had been engaged before she married Farnsworth.

"Who told you that?" I asked.

"Bernice did. He told her."

"Miller?" I exclaimed in astonishment.

"Of course not!" Hilda answered. "I meant Farnsworth. Bernice doesn't know Miller at all. She didn't even know who he was when she saw him in the room that night with Farnsworth."

"Didn't know him?" I echoed incredulously. "How do you know she didn't?"

"She said so."

I dropped the subject, but I wondered to myself why, if Bernice didn't know that the man she had seen shoot Farnsworth was Miller, she had gone to see Miller immediately before making her statement to the police.

"Dick," Hilda went on. "I want to explain something to you. I'm terribly ashamed of myself."

"You ought to be," I said, thinking she referred to her recent treatment of me.

"You must have wondered what was the matter with me."

"I did."

"Well, you see," she looked cautiously around at the door into the waiting room to make sure it was closed, then lowering her voice added, "I thought then that Bernice had shot Farnsworth."

"What!" That made me sit up, I can tell you.

"I did. It was shameful of me, but I did, and I was worried nearly out of my mind," she continued. "You remember I told you I didn't close my eyes that night? It was because of what I knew."

"I was sure you knew something you were keeping from me," I said.

"And then when she—went off that morning—well, I was simply scared stiff."

"But what was it you knew?"

"I knew she had a pistol—for one

thing—in her hand bag. I saw it in the dressing room that night. And I knew she was afraid of him, and that he had threatened to kill *her,* and besides——"

"Well?" I prompted.

She looked at me very earnestly. "Dick, I wouldn't tell this to a soul on earth but you, but—I saw her go into that other room that night."

"Which other room?" I asked, mystified.

"Why, you know—the other room on that floor—next to the one where—Farnsworth was shot. She was in there when she saw what happened, not out in the hall, as she said in the paper. But I guess she didn't like to tell the truth about that because it looked as if—well, there wasn't any reason for her going in there except to listen, was there?"

"Why does she say she went in?" I asked.

Hilda stared at me. "Why, you don't suppose I *asked* her, do you? But we were upstairs, you see, just starting down when I looked over the banister and saw Farnsworth and a strange man coming up the lower flight, and so we waited until they had gone into the reception room. Then she told me to go on down to the dining room, that she wanted to wait and speak to Rip alone, as soon as the man with him had gone. So of course I went down, and when I was halfway down the lower stairs I heard her coming down the upper ones, and I waited, and when she didn't come on I looked through the railing and saw her going into that room. I went on down then, because I didn't want her to come out and see me watching her, and —well, you know what happened after that."

I was silent for a moment, trying to adjust my previous ideas to these new facts. It was of no importance, probably, that Miss Blair had lied about the exact spot from which she had witnessed the shooting, and Hilda's explanation of that was doubtless the right one. But that Miss Blair had had a pistol in her possession that night was news that fitted in well with my own conviction that Miller had not had one.

"Hilda," I asked, "did you hear the loud talking that she mentions in her statement to the police?"

Hilda shook her head. "She had to give some reason, I guess, for coming downstairs," she answered tranquilly.

"Do you know where she went Sunday morning?"

She shook her head again.

I looked at her, so happy and carefree in her restored confidence, and yet, as far as I could see, as much in danger of being involved in an unsavory scandal and a murder trial as she had ever been. For that we were through with the affair I did not for a minute believe. I frowned, rose, and began moving about the room, my feelings calling for the outlet of action.

"What's the matter?" she asked after watching me silently for a few moments.

"Oh, Hilda," I broke out impetuously, turning to her, "I wish to Heaven you were my wife and out of that wretched life of yours. The stage is no place for a girl like you. Give it up and marry me. You can see for yourself the sort of thing that you're exposed to all the time—associating with all sorts of people and subject to gossip and—I can't bear it, that's all. You've got to marry me and get out of it."

She had risen from her chair and was staring at me, dumfounded, I supposed, at my sudden and unexpected outburst. I dried up then and stood looking at her, waiting for what she would say.

"Is that the reason you want to marry me?" she faltered. "Just to get me off the stage? Is that the reason you want *me* to marry *you?*"

"Why—no!" I managed to articulate.

"Then"—she dropped her eyes and blushed beautifully—"why do you talk about—*that?*"

CHAPTER IX.

THE FINDING OF THE GRAND JURY.

I DID not confide my anxiety about the status of the Farnsworth case to Hilda, even though we were engaged. She seemed so happy that I could not bear to destroy her flattering belief that because she was going to marry "the most wonderful man in the whole world," all her troubles were over for the rest of her life. I hoped they were, but that was my limit of confidence.

I did go so far as to suggest that we must be careful about being seen together, because of my connection with the case, and we were careful, as careful as we humanly could be under the circumstances. But it was far from being an ideal state of affairs for a newly engaged couple.

Whenever I saw her I asked her if she had heard anything, and she asked me the same question, her source of possible news being Bernice Blair and mine Arnold Miller. Then, after a few days, Miss Blair left the "Step Lively" company and told Hilda it would be better for them not to see each other until the case was settled, an opinion which I heartily endorsed. It lessened a little my resentment toward the girl for the uncomfortable position she had gotten us into. But Hilda was unhappy about it.

"She's so changed, dear, you wouldn't know her," she told me again and again. "Honestly, I believe she really cared for him. I just can't bear to think of her all alone—grieving."

I replied that Miss Blair was probably not alone nor grieving, and more than once I was on the point of going further and telling Hilda frankly just what I thought about Miss Blair. Once in particular, I remember, it was all I could do to control the impulse. That was one day when Hilda remarked mournfully that it didn't seem right for us to be so happy when Bernice was so unhappy—and after all she had done for us.

Well, that was pretty near the limit, and I exploded. "Done for us!" I said. "She's got us into a very nasty mess, that's what she's done for us!"

"Well, she got us out again!" said Hilda, with fine feminine logic. I refrained from retorting that that still remained to be seen, but I resolved then and there that after Hilda was married she should not keep up her friendship with Miss Blair. However I need not have worried about that, as it turned out.

I continued to look after Miller's shoulder and in that way came into frequent contact with him. He seemed to be frank enough with me in speaking of the case, always assuming of course that Farnsworth's death had occurred, as he and Miss Blair had said, and as nothing had developed, so far as I knew, to indicate the contrary I had no expectation of ever knowing the truth—that is, if I did not already know it.

The case seemed to be hanging fire, I gathered. The district attorney's office was undecided about taking it to the grand jury at once, or waiting until there had been further investigation. I was questioned again about my share in the affair, and that was all I knew at first hand about what was going on. The papers handled the subject very gingerly, I noticed, and to my surprise not a word was printed in them that linked Miller's name with Mrs. Farnsworth's. *Town Gossip*, of course, did its worst in that direction without mentioning names, but none of the reputable papers had even a hint of such a thing. An instructive demonstration of the power of wealth and of social prestige.

Finally the case did go before the grand jury, and I was called as a witness, of course. Being an unimportant one I was allowed to cool my heels in a waiting room for several hours, but aside from the interruption of my per-

sonal business I did not object to the delay, because it gave me the chance of a good look at Mrs. Farnsworth, whom I was naturally somewhat curious about. I had seen her picture in the papers and was prepared to find her good looking, but she was more than that, she was beautiful. Being a blond, her widow's weeds were extremely becoming, but there was nothing in her demeanor to indicate that she was aware of the fact. She looked simply very lovely and young and unhappy. I couldn't blame Miller for being in love with her, if he was, nor poor Farnsworth for his jealousy. A woman as beautiful as that made trouble between men without anybody being to blame for it.

But how Farnsworth could, after her, have seen anything to attract him in a girl like Bernice Blair, I could not understand. Miss Blair was there too, that day, of course, but she had been questioned and had gone away again before Mrs. Farnsworth arrived, and the latter was not made to wait, but went at once into the jury room. I saw her as she went in and again as she came out, and the second time she was sobbing behind her black veil which she had pulled down over her face.

Miss Blair did not weep, I noticed. And I could see no signs of the change in her that Hilda had told me about. And, as she was also kept waiting for some time before she was called, I had ample opportunity to look at her. She had nodded to me on entering the room, then had chosen a seat as far as possible from mine, an arrangement that was highly satisfactory to me. She was smartly, but quietly, gowned in a costume she must have had made for the occasion, because I could not imagine her going about her every-day affairs so inconspicuously attired.

She was alone, and, as she sat down, I noticed that she nodded in greeting to a young man sitting near her, a man I did not know, but thought I had seen before somewhere. He was about thirty or so, maybe older, and had a thin face and large, deep-set eyes and was prematurely bald. I kept looking at him from time to time, bothered by my inability to place him, and he must have noticed the fact and been annoyed or embarrassed by it, for he suddenly got up and took a seat on my side of the room, where I could not see him unless I turned around for the purpose.

And right there was where he made his mistake—by getting up, I mean, and walking. Because as soon as I saw him walk I remembered him. He had a slight limp, and I knew where he had got it. He had been a hospital patient of mine a few years before, had a broken knee cap which he had acquired in a fight in a restaurant where he was employed as a waiter. A man, drunk at the time, I believe, had accused him of picking his pocket while serving him, and the result had been a free-for-all fight and a cracked knee. He was English, I recalled, and then, remembering that Miss Blair evidently knew him, it occurred to me that he must be the Farnsworth butler. She had doubtless been at Farnsworth's house more than once before that last unforgettable occasion, though it is only fair to say that she did not appear that night to know her way about the place. She had had to ask Farnsworth, I recalled, which room on the floor above was his, when he told her to go up there to fix her hair.

Evidently my former patient had recognized me and preferred that I should not return the compliment, for which I did not blame him. Whether he had been guilty of the charge of pocket-picking or not, the charge itself was not a matter for pride. Miller came in about that time and took a seat with me, and I asked him about the man and learned that my guess that he was the butler in the case was correct.

That unexpected encounter was the only interesting incident of my grand-

jury appearance, except, of course, the glimpses I had of Mrs. Farnsworth. And there is no reason for dwelling on the grand jury's consideration of the Farnsworth case. Miller was not indicted. The evidence of self-defense was too strong. The bullet in the wall had proved to be a thirty-eight, and the fact that Farnsworth had, in the opinion of the medical examiner, been killed instantly, was accepted as proof that he had fired first. Besides, there was the testimony of Bernice Blair to support Miller's testimony, to say nothing of several witnesses, including Mrs. Farnsworth, who testified to Farnsworth's unstable mental condition.

But in the end, I think, it was Miller's personality and his splendid reputation that saved the day. He impressed the jurymen as he had impressed me. They could not believe that he had shot his friend deliberately any more than I could. Only I went further, I didn't believe he had shot him at all.

And he hadn't, but the grand jury never knew that.

CHAPTER X.

MISS BLAIR TELLS.

LESS than a week later, as I remember, I learned the truth of what had occurred that eventful Saturday night. That I ever should learn it was as far from my expectations as anything in the world could be, but if I had not I should have gone to my grave convinced that I had not. And, also, perhaps, the worse for having missed a valuable lesson.

The finding of the grand jury was of course a great relief to us all. Corliss, who had been lying so low that I neither saw nor heard of him, invited me to a little celebration at his club, and it was plain that, now that the danger was all over, he was tremendously pleased at having been in the thick of it. All that bothered him was that he couldn't brag about it. His wife was not dead yet.

Miller took his exoneration calmly, so far as I could judge, but he had grown so thin and looked so far from well that I was glad to hear from him that he was going abroad as soon as he could arrange his business. Hilda, of course, was perfectly satisfied with the outcome, and so was I in a way, especially when I learned from her that her friend, Miss Blair, had decided to try her luck in London and was sailing almost immediately. She could not sail too soon to please me, I thought, but I didn't say so to Hilda. I was glad afterward that I had not.

My afternoon office hour was just over, I remember, and I was on the point of going out when the telephone rang, and to my surprise I recognized Miss Blair's rather strident voice. She wished to see me, she said, on a matter of importance, and, if I was in and alone, she would jump into a taxi and come right over.

She came—in full war paint, so to speak. Vanished were the simple clothes she had donned for the benefit of simple jurymen. She must have rented them, I thought, for the day. She looked her part now, or rather she looked herself. Her dark eyes, made-up as if for th footlights, peered into mine from unde a large black velvet hat that she wore cocked over one of them at an absurd angle. Her complexion was as unconvincing as her eyelashes and as conspicuous. She had a handsome fur thing around her neck, and between its ends a long string of pearls hung in full view. She sat down in the chair I indicated and extracted a cigarette case from her hand bag.

"Mind if I smoke?" she asked as she struck a match.

It seemed unnecessary to reply, so I said nothing. What the important matter was that she had come to see me about I could not imagine. But I did not suppose it to be really important, and, as I had important business of my

own to attend to, I did not intend to waste much time on her.

"My Lord, but you hate me, don't you?" she remarked calmly, when she had lighted her cigarette and puffed at it a couple of times. She had crossed her legs, too, and was leaning back comfortably in her chair. She seemed in no hurry whatever.

I didn't answer. Again it seemed unnecessary.

"Know why?" she said, narrowing her black eyes at me. "You're jealous, that's all—because Hilda's fond of me. I hear you and she are engaged?"

"Yes," said I curtly.

"Congratulations. She's the best ever. And I guess you're as good as the average—I don't know. But I'm glad she's going to marry and leave the stage. I'm going to London. Maybe she mentioned it."

"She did," I said.

"I sail to-morrow, and that's why I wanted to see you. I got something to say to you." She paused a moment. "Who do you think shot Farnsworth?" she asked.

I looked straight at her and answered quietly: "You."

She nodded in a perfectly matter-of-fact way. "I had a hunch that was about the way you'd doped it out. Arnold Miller told me he thought you didn't take much stock in our little fairy tale, and that being the case I picked myself as your best bet for the guilty party. Well, I object. It may seem strange, but I do. Not that I care about you, but I do about Hilda, because what I did was for her and nobody else. And I've got a moving picture in my mind's eye right now of you and she on your wedding trip telling each other everything you know. Well, I want to see to it that what you tell her about me killing Farnsworth is the way it happened, see?"

Again no reply seemed needed. She sat up in her chair and went on, after a draw at her cigarette.

"I had to make a choice in that business—a darned hard choice, let me tell you—and I made it for her. And I want her to know that."

"What do you mean?" I asked, staring, for I couldn't imagine what in the world she was driving at, talking about Hilda in that way.

"Remember that night, don't you? Hilda and I went upstairs to fix our hair, and you men went down to the dining room? Well, while we were up there Miller came. We saw him coming up the steps. I knew Rip was expecting somebody, but I didn't know it was Miller. I didn't know who it was. I didn't know it was Miller until Rip was dead. But Rip was acting so queer I was worried. That's why I made Hilda come along with us and bring you. I didn't want to be alone with him. Why, I was so scared I had a pistol in my bag, and I'd never touched one of the things before."

She paused a moment and fixed her black eyes on me. I stared back, waiting. She drew again at her cigarette and went on.

"Well, I told Hilda to go on down to the dining room, that I wanted to wait and speak to Rip alone after whoever was with him was gone. But what I really wanted was to find out what was going on—what Rip was up to, because I was worried about him. I leaned over the banister, watching Hilda go down, and all of a sudden I heard something behind me. I turned around quick and stepped back on instinct, the way you do sometimes, and when I was inside the room where we'd been before, the back room, I heard a step, and I got behind the door, not knowing what was coming."

She stopped again and puffed calmly at her cigarette.

"Go on," I said.

"Who do you think it was came out

of that front room?" she asked, with another of her narrowed glances.

"The butler?"

"Yes," she said in a tone I could not interpret, "the butler—of course. He passed the room I was in, but didn't look in. He thought I'd gone downstairs, of course, and I waited a while and then went out into the hall and took a look over the banister again, and I saw him go into the front room—the room that adjoins the room Rip and Miller were in."

At that I relaxed suddenly and sat back and smiled at her. It was all a lie she was telling, and I had caught her in it.

"What's the matter?" she asked, staring at me.

"What's the use of lying?" I asked.

"Lying?" She looked genuinely puzzled.

"You didn't see any butler go into that room, and you know it. You went in there yourself. Hilda saw you."

"Hilda?"

"Hilda. She was on the bottom flight of stairs and saw you through the railing go into that room."

She shook her head. "You're wrong there, my friend."

"Well, she could hardly have mistaken the butler for you," I said.

"No, but it wasn't the butler I saw go in. I just said that because you did. What Hilda saw was a black skirt probably, and because I had on a black dress she thought it was me. But it wasn't. It was Mrs. Ripley Farnsworth."

"What!" She had given me a surprise, which was of course what she had wished to do, but I didn't believe her and said so.

She smiled and leaned back in her chair. "Do you think a man like Arnold Miller would have taken the blame for anything *I* did?" she asked.

"Do you mean to say that she shot her husband?" I stammered.

Bernice Blair nodded silently.

"I don't believe it," I declared.

"Miller believed it," she retorted. "When I went to his rooms on Monday and told him, he believed me. I'll never forget his face—the horror in it." She looked off for a moment, her eyes narrowed, her mouth suddenly hard. "She might as well have let Rip kill him. He'll never marry her," she said.

"I can't believe such a thing is possible," I murmured weakly.

She smiled grimly. "She doesn't look the part, eh? Well, you'd have thought she did if you'd seen her in action. I saw her as plainly as I'm seeing you this minute. She didn't care who saw her—until it was over. I was at the hall door, exactly as I told the police I was, and she was behind the curtains at the other door. She didn't see me. She was too busy watching out that nothing happened to her dear Arnold, and he didn't see her because his back was to her. He really believed Rip shot himself at first. Then I guess he thought I did. I don't believe he had a pistol at all. She had warned him that Rip was jealous of him, and that it wasn't safe for him to be alone with him, but his conscience was clear, so he wasn't afraid. Her conscience wasn't clear, so she went armed. She knew Rip had good cause to be jealous of Miller, not because of anything Miller had done, but because she was in love with him. And she was right about the danger. Rip meant to kill Miller."

Miss Blair crushed out the fire of her cigarette against my desk and dropped the remains on the floor. I watched her, still too astonished to do more than look and listen. She smiled at me, a kinder smile than I had yet had from her.

"You don't know much about women, do you?" she inquired. "Well, I hope you'll never have the sort of lesson Miller has had—and poor Rip." With a deep heave of her chest she stood up. "I guess that's about all," she said. "But that's what I came to tell you to tell

Hilda on your honeymoon. That, and that it was for her sake I didn't make that woman pay."

"Pay?" I repeated stupidly.

"By giving the thing away, I mean. They'd never have done anything to her, of course. She's too rich for that. But she'd have suffered a little anyhow from the scandal and all. I wanted to do it, I don't mind saying. I never wanted to do anything in all my life like I wanted to tell the truth to the police about what happened that night. But I had to think of Hilda. I couldn't let her in for anything like that. She had something better coming to her from me than that. I couldn't let her being my friend do her any harm. You see"—she looked appealingly at me for a moment, the kind of look I had never seen in her eyes before—"I'm awfully fond of Hilda." And she turned and moved toward the door.

"Miss Blair," I said, "I—want to beg your pardon."

"Oh, that's all right, my friend," she answered. "I knew you didn't understand, and anyhow I don't guess I'm much better than you thought I was. But I loved Rip, and he loved her. That was the way things stood, and I hated her for it—naturally. And I wanted to hurt her when the chance came along. Lord, how I wanted to show her up for what she was! I had to go off and fight the thing out by myself, and—well, Hilda won the decision. And I'd kind of like her to know about it."

"I'll tell her," I said. "You can depend on that."

"Thanks," she returned. "We won't be meeting again, I guess."

"Oh, you'll be coming back some day," I said.

She smiled a little, the saddest smile I thought that I had ever seen. Then she held out her hand.

"Well—till then," she said. But I knew, and I knew that she knew I knew, that her "then" would never come.

KEEPER FINDS STILL IN SING SING

IT was learned recently from police records that something closely resembling a still was found in Sing Sing Prison a short time ago. There was so much evidence of prisoners imbibing that three of them were "locked up" following a "dry" raid made by Thomas McInerney, principal keeper. The names of the prisoners who were locked up are William Tammany, John McGuire, alias McGraw, and J. D. Nolan. When Warden Lawes was interviewed in connection with the affair, he said that a little copper receptacle which might have been used as a still was found in a room in the building where the shoe shop is located. The officials had, however, found none of the prune juice which they had heard was fermenting, though they admitted that so long as prunes are used in the prison, there will be a chance for the prisoners to get prune juice.

ITALIAN PAINTER SUSPECTED OF FORGERY

THE recent arrest of Paolo Ciulla in Rome, Italy, was brought about by police of that city after months of detective work in trying to learn the source of counterfeit Italian and American bank notes which were being circulated throughout the southern part of Italy. When detectives searched the living quarters of Ciulla, they found an elaborate establishment for printing notes. The prisoner later admitted that he had been counterfeiting for the past thirty years, sometimes operating alone, and at others with a gang of forgers who have long been sought by the police. It was stated unofficially that Ciulla had given the officials information by means of which they expect to arrest others who have been guilty of circulating some of the counterfeit notes.

The Moth

By Charles G. Booth

Author of "Hammer and Nails," "Through the Porthole," etc.

IT was because of his health that Lawrence Brent had come to Los Angeles. Since his sojourn in that sun-ripened city had achieved its purpose, he had intended to entrain for his home in Indiana that evening. Unfortunately—or fortunately; he was quite uncertain yet how he should regard it—this incredible affair had happened.

Undoubtedly it was the most amazing event of his prosaic, unadventurous life. Mystery and adventure he had always considered as qualities apart from human experience, existing only within the elastic bounds of fiction. Yet, in the palm of his hand, alternately gleaming and glowing in the brilliant electrics like some dully burning fire, shielding the mystery of its warm, living heart with its pale, lustrous sheen, lay the refutation of this superficial theory.

Brent was at an utter loss to know what he should do with it. It had dropped into his hands as unexpectedly and as precipitously as a meteor falling in an intensely black night. He could only regard it with an increasing amazement and speculate wildly as to its immense value. Indeed, apart from the large sums of money he had manipulated in his father's small, Indiana bank, he was certain that it represented a greater wealth than anything he had ever held in his hands before.

Brent's mind had received only an impressionistic picture of the occurrence. It was much as if a great diamond had flashed swiftly before his eyes in a sunlit room and he had caught only the glitter of its facets. Quickly, Brent reviewed the affair again.

He had gone into a Spring Street cigar store to buy a box of cigars for his father. On coming out, he had stood within the entrance to the store, had lit a cigarette, and through its smoke wraiths had contemplated the teeming street. The six o'clock crowd had surged and flowed and boiled like a vast whirlpool. The world seemed to have emptied itself into the darkening city.

Suddenly, for an entrancing moment, the face of a girl had detached itself from the confused procession. It was a young, vivid, tender face of a dark, exquisite beauty, stamped with an expression of terror. The face had gone out of Brent's vision like an extinguished flame, and, to his astonishment, a weighty object had thudded against his chest. His hand had caught it mechanically. It was a woman's silver mesh bag, obviously well worn, and it had come detached from its supporting chain. Brent had stepped onto the sidewalk to return it to its owner.

But no one had appeared to claim the mesh bag. For several seconds Brent had stood upon the teeming sidewalk, his stalwart form buffeted by the intolerant crowd. Evidently, he had concluded, for some unaccountable reason, its owner was not yet aware of her loss. Brent had thrust the bag into his pocket and returned to his Fifth Street hotel.

As he had entered the elevator, it occurred to him that very probably the bag belonged to the girl whose terror-stricken face had made so deep an impression on his mind. She had been running along the crowded street, the chain had snapped as such chains have a habit of doing at unfortunate moments, and the speed of her flight had precipitated the bag into Brent's hands. He could not understand why the girl had not discovered her loss.

Not until Brent had reached his room on the fourth floor did he open the bag. Within it he found several silver coins; a tiny, lace-edged handkerchief redolent of a perfume his unpracticed nose could not identify; a return, interurban ticket to Santa Monica; and a small, worn, purple plush case of the variety furnished by jewelers.

To his utter astonishment, on opening the case, he had found embedded in its worn, purple satin interior a superb, round, white pearl. With conflicting sensations of awe and incredulity he had laid the gleaming pearl in the palm of his hand.

So intense had been Brent's astonishment at his unexpected discovery that for several seconds he could entertain no coherent thought. Color had ebbed and flowed in his cheeks. The magnetic beauty of the jewel had hypnotized him. He had thought that he had never seen such loveliness before. Recovering himself, he reverently explored the lustrous surface of the pearl with the tip of a forefinger. Its skin was of delicate, near-white tint that gleamed and glowed in Brent's hand as some living organism might have done, secure in the protective armor of its bewitching beauty.

After Brent had returned the pearl to its purple case, he straightened his broad shoulders sharply; an expression of perplexity invaded his face. His possession of the pearl necessitated a change in his plans. Brent's sojourn in southern California, which had followed a serious illness, had returned the glow of health to his cheeks. An atmosphere of wholesome vitality clung to his vigorous, young form. He was ready to return to his Indiana home. His suit case was packed; he had informed the clerk that he would leave on the evening train.

But Brent realized that he could not go until after he had disposed of the pearl. To leave it in the care of some one whose honesty he could not trust, was unthinkable; and of course he could not take it with him. He could leave it with the police, but the idea was distasteful to him. The romantic aspect of the affair appealed to him. Adventure was all too rare in his Indiana home town for him to reject it when it offered itself to him. Naturally, he wanted to see it through.

Doubtless, there would be an advertisement in the morning papers; possibly news comment upon the affair. If not, he could advertise for the owner of the pearl or take whatever other steps occurred to him. Pleasant sensations of expectancy tingled within him.

His determination to prolong his stay was further supported by his curiosity about that vivid, terror-stricken face he had glimpsed through the blue-gray smoke from his cigarette. He began to wonder if some underlying, common cause might not account for the girl's evident terror, and for the fact that she had not yet attempted to recover the mesh bag. The thought, with its mysterious connotations, gripped him, strengthened immeasurably his determination to remain in Los Angeles.

By letter he had informed his mother that he would reach his home town on the ten-twenty train of the day he had named. His mother was a methodical woman who invariably assumed that the expected always happened. She had instructed him in regard to the clothing he must wear in the warmer Califor-

nia climate if he would escape catching cold; she had distributed moth balls in his spare garments to repel the winged invaders which, she was convinced, would otherwise lodge in, and destroy, them. When her son did not arrive on the ten-twenty, she would assume that he was ill, that he had been waylaid, or that other misfortune had happened to him.

Brent determined to telegraph in the morning that he had been delayed. He must think up some reasonably sounding explanation. The truth would certainly raise doubts of his sanity.

Brent remembered that he had not yet dined. He replaced the pearl in its case and enclosed the case in the silver mesh bag. The bag he put in his pocket as he believed it would be safer on his person than left unguarded in his room. Then he went down to the dining room on the second floor.

II.

When Brent had finished his dinner, he went at once to the lounge room on the same floor and read, with vagrant interest, for several hours. Toward ten o'clock it occurred to him that the late editions of the evening papers might contain some explanation of this strange affair which so persistently haunted his mind.

Brent descended to the lobby, bought several newspapers at the news stand, and retired to a secluded corner of the lobby to look them over. No sooner had he settled himself than a timid voice at his shoulder murmured: "Monsieur."

Dropping his papers, Brent swung round sharply, and to his intense astonishment he beheld again the dark, vivid face he had seen through the smoke from his cigarette. A troubled expression replaced the terror that had been so marked on the girl's countenance several hours before.

"I am sorry, monsieur. I have great troubles. I must spik to you immediate!" Her deep, dark eyes searched Brent's face.

"Why, yes, of course! Excuse me. I didn't know." Brent sprang to his feet awkwardly. His unread newspapers scattered.

"I have waited long time—three, four hours. I thought you had gone! I was distract!"

"I'm awfully sorry!" exclaimed Brent distressfully. "Really, I didn't know you were here." He indicated the deep chair he had vacated. The girl took it, and Brent drew up another. "Now tell me all about it."

But, now that she had found him, the girl seemed utterly at a loss to know how to begin the explanation Brent supposed she had come to make. Her slim fingers twisted nervously. Her deep, dark eyes alternately scrutinized his face and scanned the thronged lobby. Evidently, she was uncertain of the character of the young man she had to deal with. Brent felt that it was his pleasant duty to reassure her.

"I suppose you have come about the pearl," he began. "Yes," he went on as she brightened. "I have it here." Brent tapped his breast pocket. "I saw your face in the crowd; then your hand bag struck me. When I looked, you were gone. It—it was like waking from a dream."

"A dream!" exclaimed the girl, her dark eyes widening. "No, monsieur, a nightmare! I shall nevaire forget! Yes, I have come for the pearl. It is my mother's. I thought when you did not come——" Her face grayed; a suggestion of the old terror stamped it.

Brent smiled understandingly.

"Monsieur comprehends?" The girl thanked him with her remarkably eloquent eyes; her distress vanished. "I shall explain." She laughed; her tone warming. "You may not think so, but

I am an Americans. Yes!" she said with emphatic dignity.

"Indeed!" ejaculated Brent. "I thought you were French!"

The girl raised a small, white hand. "No, no!" she protested. "I was born in Italy. My mother—she is French. My father died many years ago. But he was Americans like me. I am Miss Brown, Miss Rosaline Brown. Is not that good Americans' name?"

"As good as my own!" enthused the other. "Mine is Brent—Lawrence Brent."

The girl held out her hand. Brent took it, relinquished it reluctantly. This affair was turning out even better than he had hoped.

"It is a good name, Mistaire Brent. I shall remember. We are good Americans—what you call one hundred per cents? Yes?"

"I should say we are!" responded Brent warmly.

"You bets!" she exclaimed delightedly. "Now I shall explain about the pearl. It was foolish of me, perhaps. I do not know. I am a stranger. You will tell me what I shall do, Mistaire Brent?"

Brent nodded vigorously. "You may depend on me."

"For six months I have lived in Santa Monica with my mother," Miss Brown resumed. "We have come from Europe where my mother sing in the opera. 'La Belle Perrault' they call her. She is verry sick! We have this pearl, which I must sell for monies. Monsieur understands? Yes. I come to Los Angeles to the jewelry store——"

The girl's voice had trembled suddenly, whispered thinly, ceased. To his astonishment, Brent saw the composure of her countenance vanish as would a gossamer web in a hot blast. The terror he had first seen in her face smote it again. Her dark eyes seemed to be set upon the cigar stand on the other side of the lobby.

"Miss Brown——"

"Monsieur, look! That man! No, no! The thin, pale one. He had gone; now he is back. Yes, yes! Ah, monsieur, he is looking for you! I know!"

Notwithstanding his bewilderment at this unexpected turn, Brent perceived that her excited description referred to a thin, wiry man with an uncommon pallor of countenance, who was standing near the cigar stand, smoking. Judging from the watchful expression on his thin face as his glance swept the great, thronged lobby, he was seeking some one.

"But why is he looking for me?" demanded Brent.

"I cannot tell you now, Mistaire Brent. It will be better if I am not here!" Her glance swept the room. "That empty chair behind the palm! I will go to it. He will not see me there."

"But what——"

"Monsieur, please! There is not time. He will tell you lies; he will tell you that I stole the pearl! It is not so, Mistaire Brent! You will keep it for me?" The girl's deep, dark eyes entreated Brent.

"Keep it for you?" gasped Brent. "I should say I will!"

"Mistaire Brent! You are good!" For an instant, Miss Brown's hand rested on Brent's arm. Then she vanished behind the decorative palm a dozen yards away.

Brent stared at the man by the cigar stand. Suddenly the man's eyes rested upon him. His face took on a keen expression. He came toward Brent with a quick, noiseless step.

The young man's pulses quickened. He picked up one of his newspapers and pretended to be engrossed in it.

"I should like a word with you, sir," said the stranger in sauve, courteous tones.

Brent looked up uninterestedly. "Good evening."

The man dropped into the chair Miss Brown had so precipitously vacated. Brent had a desire to pitch him out of it.

From an elaborately engraved card-case the stranger extracted a personal card, which he handed to Brent. The young man noticed that the man's hands were thin and long and white. Subtle, wiry hands they seemed, accustomed to the touch of lovely things, the manipulation of delicate instruments. The card read simply, "John Lamont."

"Mr. Lamont," said Brent, as much to himself as to the other. He was unconscious of the doubtful accent in his intonation of the name.

The man inclined his head. Brent shot a swift, inclusive glance at him. He was faultlessly attired, his attitude was scrupulously correct. A man of affairs one might have thought him. Nevertheless, Brent could not rid himself of a sense of the inappropriateness of his name. He looked any one but a John Lamont. The most striking feature of the man was his pallor. His thin hands were white, his face was pale, his spare hair and his thin eyebrows were straw-colored. There was something unsubstantial, insectlike about him. Instinctively, Brent disliked him. Moreover, he got the impression that he had seen this man before.

Mr. Lamont seemed disposed to come to the point at once. "I am afraid I don't know your name," he suggested.

"Brent," supplied that young man somewhat shortly.

"Mr. Brent, you have in your possession a white pearl valued, at present low prices, at approximately $10,000."

"Indeed," Brent countered. "What makes you think that?" His impression, that he had seen the man before, strengthened.

"I saw you put the mesh bag that contained it in your pocket just after six o'clock this evening." Mr. Lamont pressed the tips of his thin fingers together and smiled gravely at Brent.

The young man lit a cigarette, and through its smoke spirals he gazed thoughtfully at the ceiling. He did not wish to dispose of Mr. Lamont until he had identified him in his mind.

"Assuming that what you say actually happened, what have you to do with it?" inquired Brent blandly.

Mr. Lamont smiled gently. His manner suggested that of a man whose life had been devoted to the handling of delicate situations.

"The history of nearly every jewel of great value, Mr. Brent, is a history of crime. To a certain extent, jewels are not unlike human beings. From the day they are discovered, they begin to acquire a record, a personality, I might almost call it. Usually, this record is not a pleasant one, particularly so when the jewel has been in possession of countless hands for several hundreds of years, as this pearl has. However, until it was stolen from my client in Paris, who acquired it legitimately enough, its record had been spotless for at least fifty years. Originally, it came from Mexico. I presume a follower of Cortez stole it from some unfortunate Indian. That does not concern us, of course.

"This pearl was stolen from my client under circumstances which make it impossible for him to attempt to recover it through the ordinary police channels. I was commissioned to see what I could do, and I have traced the pearl to Los Angeles." Mr. Lamont paused. "I might say," he went on, "that I am authorized to pay a reward of $1,000 to whoever returns the pearl, no questions asked."

"I wonder," interjected Brent, still puffing on his cigarette, "how you knew I was staying here."

Mr. Lamont laughed genially. "I was just coming to that. The pearl got into the possession of a woman named

Brown. I have tried to induce her to return it. She has refused. To-day her daughter attempted to sell the pearl in a downtown jewelry store. It happened that I was in the store at the time. The suspicions of the proprietor, an acquaintance of mine, were naturally aroused. The girl caught sight of me, whereupon she snatched the pearl from the jeweler, thrust it into her mesh bag, and fled. I was determined to keep her in sight, so I went after her. She's a fleet young miss, and I lost her in the crowd on Spring Street. I saw her again on the opposite side of the street, and I crossed over. When she saw me coming, she broke into a run again. Just then the chain on her bag snapped, and the bag struck you on the chest."

"Why didn't you ask me for it at once?" interrupted Brent.

Mr. Lamont pursed his lips. "Would you have believed me if I had? No. I could hardly have convinced you among that crowd that I was speaking the truth, so I followed you here. You entered the elevator before I could get up to you, and since I didn't know your name I had to wait until you reappeared. Do I make myself clear?"

Brent nodded through a swirl of cigarette smoke.

"As for the girl," Lamont resumed, "she's around here, too." He glanced about him. "Or she was up to half an hour ago. Followed us, I suppose."

"Probably," admitted Brent.

"I presume you are satisfied that I am entitled to the pearl. I shall pay you the reward as soon as you have turned it over."

"To tell the truth, I'm not satisfied," said Brent thoughtfully.

"Why aren't you?" demanded Mr. Lamont a trifle stiffly. "I thought I had made my case plain enough."

Brent did not reply. This was the very question he had set himself to answer. Why wasn't he satisfied? The man's story sounded straight enough. His reason told him that it was the truth. But his heart and his instincts said it was a lie. It must be a lie!

"Will you come to the police station and repeat what you have told me?" Brent asked suddenly.

Mr. Lamont shook his head regretfully. "I wish I could, but I must obey the instructions of my client. He is a man of cosmopolitan character, and he has deep personal reasons for keeping this affair from the police. You see, I am appealing to your honesty."

Brent ignored this last statement. He demanded: "Your client would rather lose the pearl than have the circumstances of its theft made public?"

"Yes. I can say this much: There is a lady involved."

Brent fell silent again. He could not bring himself to accept this man's story. There must be some flaw in it. If only he could discover it! He lit another cigarette, buried his head in a cloud of smoke, and glanced cautiously at the palm a dozen yards away. His heart throbbed a little faster. She was still there. Through the green fronds of the plant he could see her dark head. A gust of impatience swept him. Lamont must be lying. There must be some happy way out of this affair. No girl of her charm, her beauty, could be what this man said she was.

"Upon what part of my explanation do your doubts center?" demanded Mr. Lamont a trifle sharply. His slight change of tone was accompanied by an even slighter change of countenance. His face hardened a little, his eyes widened. It seemed as if the shadow of his inner self had fallen upon him.

Suddenly, as if the man's past stood out before him in letters of fire, Brent knew beyond all doubt that he was lying. His believing heart leaped. He crushed his glowing cigarette, flung it into a receptacle. "Beyond your account of your persecution of this girl, I disbelieve every word you have told

me." His eyes fell upon the card. "First there is this." He tore the card into bits and tossed them after the cigarette.

"Mr. Brent!"

"Don't trouble to invent fresh lies!" snapped Brent. "You are not John Lamont! You are Barton Phares, sometimes called The Moth! You were implicated in the Cleveland First Traders' Bank swindle. Trickery and bluff instead of strong-arm methods usually carry you through! But you have a police record. There is a photograph of you in my father's bank! Your explanation is a tissue of lies!"

The Moth had sprung to his feet, the whiteness of him crimsoned, his urbanity stripped off. His lips mouthed soundlessly.

"And leave Miss Brown and her mother alone, or I'll jail you!"

The Moth assumed his natural coloring. The pallid characteristics which had given him his name seemed suddenly to accentuate the evil revealed in his countenance. Brent felt the menace of the man.

"You are making a mistake, Mr. Brent," he said acidly.

"So are you!" snapped Brent.

The Moth turned abruptly and, with his peculiar, flitting, soundless walk, strode away.

III.

The whisper of garments hauled Brent out of the whirlpool of indignation into which his perception of The Moth's deceit had flung him. Miss Brown stood before him, dropped into the chair The Moth had vacated. She gave Brent her hand and withdrew it quickly. "Mistaire Brent, you kept your promise! It was good. I cannot thank you!" Her deep eyes expressed the intensity of her gratitude.

"Oh, I could do nothing else," responded Brent. His eyes did not leave her face.

"He said I had stolen it? Yes?"

Brent grinned. "I don't think he'll say it again, or trouble you, either. You see, I know something of the man. He has an unpleasant record." Briefly, Brent described what had happened.

Miss Brown clapped her hands. "And now I shall tell monsieur about the pearl. Then I must go. My mother is sick—she is alone——"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Brent. "Your mother! I had forgotten!" He dragged out his watch. It was twenty after eleven. "You must let me run you home. I'll get a car. You can tell me about it as we go."

"Mistaire Brent! It is too much! I cannot trouble you. You have been too good."

"Trouble!" shouted Brent. "I should say not! Not a word!" he insisted as Miss Brown seemed inclined to protest. "Stay right here. I'll get my hat and coat and have a car round in three minutes."

Brent bounded toward the elevator. When he got to his room, he hurriedly donned his overcoat, for the fall night was chilly. It was the first time he had worn the garment since he had come to Los Angeles. The odor of his mother's protective moth balls smote his nostrils. He smiled reminiscently.

From the garage that had served him since he had come to the city, he ordered, by telephone, a roadster to be brought to the door of the hotel. He would drive it himself.

Brent descended to the lobby, speculating again upon what explanation of his delay he should wire to his mother, that could even approach the truth of this remarkable affair without arousing in her methodical mind doubts of his sanity.

"We have just time for a sandwich and a cup of coffee," Brent announced. "I know you have had no dinner." He swept the submissive Miss Brown into the dining room.

Between gulps of hot coffee Brent drew the mesh bag from his pocket and handed it to the girl.

"No, no, monsieur. You keep it for the present—until we have arrive. Better—I will take the chatelaine, you shall keep the pearl."

Miss Brown returned the purple case to Brent, who put it in his breast pocket.

They left the dining room. The roadster was waiting. Brent dismissed the chauffeur and helped the girl into the machine.

As Brent backed the car away from the curbstone, his eyes rested upon a small man standing before a news stand next to the swinging doors of the great hotel. It was The Moth! The white glare from an overhanging electric sign illumined the pale, thin features of the man; seemed also to enhance those peculiarities of feature and coloring and pose which had given him his strange name. Their eyes met. The expression on The Moth's pallid countenance did not change, yet Brent felt the menace of the man again.

A sensation of apprehension seized him. He quelled it instantly, busied himself with the mechanism of the engine, and swung the car into the street. A glance at Miss Brown convinced him that she had not seen The Moth.

They emerged swiftly from the teeming area of the city and ran smoothly between tall rows of bark-stripped, eucalyptus trees, feathery peppers, and date palms like great pineapples. A curved moon sailed in a star-sown sky. The sweet-smelling landscape was suffused with pale, mysterious light. Mountains, inscrutable and black, bulked beyond them.

No word had passed between Brent and the girl since they had left the hotel. They seemed immersed in happy contentment. The engine purred like some benign feline.

Presently, when they had come into the open, and the pavement stretched before them like a black, oily ribbon, Miss Brown began to speak.

"Mistaire Brent, you have trusted me all this time. I cannot understand. It is very strange. You do not know me, yet you believe I spik the truths."

"Who wouldn't?" exploded Brent. "I—I'd believe anything you told me!"

"Monsieur!"

"Yes," and Brent nodded. "One can tell." He gripped the wheel firmly.

Silence fell upon them. A great touring car, speeding cityward, streaked past them in a whirl of gusty laughter.

"Now I shall tell you about the pearl," Miss Brown resumed. "It is of immense value, this pearl. My father got it in Borneo many years ago. He gave it to my mother when they were married. When I was a small girl, my father was killed in a terrible railway accident in France. My mother and I—we are alone. There was not much monies, but my mother sings in the opera—I have said she is La Belle Perrault—and there is enough. Then she gets a sickness of the throat, and we came to California, the land of my father. Soon there is no more monies; but we have the pearl. At first my mother will not sell it because my father gave it to her. Monsieur comprehends?"

Brent nodded. "Yes, yes."

"And then this man, this pale man, this Moth man, comes! He knew my father in Paris; he knows of the pearl, and that we have it. He wants to buy—for one thousand dollar! Think, Mistaire Brent! One thousand dollar for so magnificent a pearl! It is to laugh!"

Brent rumbled indignantly in his throat.

"We tell him there is—what you call it?—nothings doing! He becomes very angry, and he says he will make it 'ot for us. Yes, monsieur, 'ot! He says my father had to leave America be-

cause there would have been troubles for him had he not gone. I know it is untrue. My mother knows it is untrue. My father was an honorable man. He went about the world, he lived in many countries, in strange places. Sometimes, he had much monies, sometimes little. But there was no word against him. My heart tells me this. Must not one believe the heart, Mistaire Brent?"

"The heart? Yes, indeed!" ejaculated Brent so emphatically that the car swerved drunkenly.

"I tell The Moth man this, and he laughs; he says it is an affair for the police. We are terrified; but we will not sell the pearl for so small a price. I tell him it is blackmail. He says he will come again. But we are resolute. I tell him he is running the bluffs.

"The next day I go to sell the pearl, for there is no more monies. But the jewelers will not buy. They want to know where I got a pearl so valuable. When I tell them, they laugh; they think I steal it.

"At last I go to a cheap store on Main Street. The man is the same; he will not buy the pearl. And who should I see there, Mistaire Brent, but this Moth man? I am distract! I seize the pearl, thrust it into its case in my chatelaine, and fly. The Moth man runs after me. Down Main Street we fly, up Fifth, along Spring. I cross the road; the Moth man follows. I run again, the handle of my chatelaine breaks, and the bag strikes monsieur on the chest!

"What shall I do? The Moth man has said it is an affair for the police. I am afraid if I claim the chatelaine he will call the police. I do not know what to do! I am in desperation! The Moth man follows you to the hotel, and I follow you both. I wait in great fear, and at last I find you. You comprehend, Mistaire Brent?" Miss Brown regarded Brent anxiously.

"Yes, I do!" said Brent grimly. His hand tightened on the wheel. "I wish I had known this before. He wouldn't have got away as easily as he did!"

The silence of contentment settled upon them again. They had come half the distance.

Suddenly, with no warning, catastrophe loomed. A huge touring car boomed behind them, streaked past them. Its brakes shrieked suddenly. Thirty yards beyond Brent's car it slowed, stopped, backed its rear wheels off the pavement, twisted its nose toward the approaching car, and stopped dead, its body flung obliquely across the pavement, its great headlights a spreading, yellow flare in the darkness.

Brent jammed on the brakes; the roadster shrieked, slithered, swung dangerously, and came to a quivering stop, its fender nosing the left rear wheel of the panting touring car.

A small, sinister figure sprang lightly from the powerful car, flitted soundlessly across Brent's glaring headlights, and hopped onto the running board of the roadster. The stream of maledictions in Brent's throat choked him, dried on his tongue. A revolver gleamed suddenly in his face.

"Stick up your hands, Brent! I want that pearl!" said The Moth in deadly tones.

The girl at Brent's shoulder shuddered; a whispering gasp escaped her lips.

Not a word could Brent utter for the boiling rage within him.

"Keep one hand up; dig out the pearl with the other! Quick!" snapped The Moth. "This is strong-arm work, not bluff," and he grinned.

The weapon at Brent's head wavered. As if to comply with the man's command Brent lowered his arm. His fist clenched suddenly, his arm shot out at The Moth's pale face.

"No, no, monsieur!" exclaimed the girl.

But The Moth was too quick for him. With a swift, backyard leap he escaped the blow and stood on the black pavement.

His face convulsed. He swung his weapon not upon Brent, but upon the girl. "Try that again," he ground out, "and she gets it!" The Moth peered along the road in both directions. They were utterly alone.

"You wouldn't dare!" choked Brent through his rage.

"Start something, then!" The Moth flung at him grimly. "I've chased that pearl for six months! Do you think you'll keep me from getting it?"

Brent's ears were keened to catch the pur of some chance motor. Beyond the mutter of their own engines and the indefinite murmurings of night, there was no sound. He grew hot, then deathly cold. A spray of sweat glistened on his forehead. A cold fury consumed him. Had the girl been safe, he would have dared anything; but with her at his side he was helpless. Brent glanced at her face. It was deathly pale; tears glistened on her cheek. Her shoulder hugged his, transmitted to him the warmth of her body. She was worth a million pearls!

"It will be better, Mistaire Brent, if you give the Moth man the pearl," Miss Brown whispered unsteadily.

Brent shuddered.

"Come on!" snarled The Moth. His weapon threatened the girl. "She knows I mean it! I don't often do jobs like this, but when I do I go through with 'em!"

Brent's hand went to his coat, fumbled with its fastenings. The Moth's pallid features creased triumphantly. There was still neither sight nor sound of a coming car.

As Brent's fingers clutched the purple case, an expression of deep despair lined his face. Another moment, and the pearl would be gone beyond all recovery. The warm shoulder at his side quivered; he caught the whispering of suppressed sobs.

Brent's fury intensified, if that were humanly possible. If only he could fling himself at that leering, pale face, smash it, grind it into the brown dust!

Suddenly, the quivering muscles of his countenance were transfixed as if he had been struck by a lightning bolt. This rigidity vanished instantly, and his face assumed an indeterminable expression. His hand thrust about beneath his coat as if he were clutching at some live thing.

The Moth's eyes glittered impatiently. His weapon advanced.

Brent dragged the purple case from beneath his coat. His fingers were trembling as if he had been smitten with some strange disease.

"Open it!" snapped The Moth. "You'll play me no tricks!"

Brent obeyed, his face as pale as The Moth's. His shaking fingers fumbled with the spring, the lid sprang back. The great pearl gleamed and glittered in the dim light diffused by the instrument board.

Grinning triumphantly, the man reached for the case. Before he could grasp it, the case slipped from Brent's trembling fingers and thudded softly on the floor of the roadster.

The Moth swore. "You scared fool!" he rasped disgustedly, swinging his weapon from the girl to Brent. "I'll give you ten seconds to find that pearl! If you haven't it then, I'll begin shooting!"

Brent dived to the floor of the car, groped around feverishly. Then he straightened up, the purple case, now closed, in his hands. "Open it!" snarled The Moth suspiciously.

Brent obeyed. The dim light from the instrument board revealed a white sphere against the worn, purple satin lining.

The Moth grunted his satisfaction. Brent snapped the case shut with averted head, as if he could not bear this final humiliation, thrust it into The Moth's outstretched hand.

The pale man flitted across the glaring headlights, leaped into the touring car. The machine rumbled, shuddered, shot into the darkness. The Moth's triumphant laughter swept backward through the keen air.

"Mistaire Brent! I am sorry! You tried very hard. It was not—your fault!" Miss Brown's voice trembled; she rested a hand upon Brent's arm.

Queer sounds rumbled in Brent's throat.

"Monsieur, you are laughing! What is it?" The girl examined Brent's crinkling face with tender anxiety.

Brent controlled his mirth with difficulty.

"I thought it might work, and it did!" he gasped out.

He took one of the girl's small hands in his, and in its rosy palm embedded a great white sphere that gleamed and glittered and winked at them as if it had become infected with Brent's extraordinary mirth.

"Mistaire Brent! The pearl! Impossible!"

From an inside pocket of his overcoat Brent took four dim, white spheres of varying sizes, which he placed in the girl's palm alongside of the pearl. "One of them had evaporated to exactly the right size!" and Brent chuckled.

Miss Brown's pretty nose wrinkled, sniffed.

"Mistaire Brent!" she gasped comprehensively.

Brent nodded. "My mother was right, after all," said he. The young man released Miss Brown's hand and turned to the infinitely less diverting business of the roadster's mechanism. "Moth balls," he added as the car stirred into exultant life. "Moth balls for Moths!"

STARVING MAN STEALS CAKE FROM CHILD

A POLICEMAN in the Hounslow district of London, England, reported a short time ago that he had deliberately turned away when he saw an old man steal some cake from a little child, making no attempt to arrest the man. The details of the report showed that the child's mother had purchased a cake for the child to eat outside the bakeshop while she went into the shop to make other purchases. A ragged man who was standing near by seized the cake from the child and ate it ravenously. Then he walked away, hiding his face in his hands. There was no censure on the part of the police captain for what the policeman had done.

MURDER REVEALED BY A DREAM

TWO physicians of Winchester, England, recently testified at the trial of Leonard Kerrigan, a fourteen-year-old boy, that an epileptic can commit a murder without realizing it and then remember his crime by dreaming of it. The prisoner, who is an epileptic, was charged with binding and gagging George Smith, a three-year-old child, and placing the body in a box in the attic of the Kerrigan boy's home. The body was found six weeks later.

On the witness stand Leonard Kerrigan said the whole matter came to him in a dream, but that he had no memory of the actual commission of the crime. The court accepted the testimony of the physicians, found the prisoner guilty, but ordered him confined in an asylum for the insane.

Deadly Safety

by Thorne Miller

Author of "And then—A Game of Golf," "In His Own Hand," etc.

IN accordance with my usual custom, I had skimmed through the morning papers in search of crime news, always eager to dig out some mystery for Pinklin West to solve. "The Tiger" was in Chicago, and the columns seemed to have little room for anything except the visit of France's war-time premier. Not being interested in international politics, I tossed the papers aside.

"Not a thing, Pinklin, that might call for your deductive talents," he said. "It looks like another dull day for us—and there've been too many of them lately to suit my fancy."

Pinkie West smiled faintly as his washed-out blue eyes rested on my disgruntled countenance. It had been all of three weeks since Detective Sergeant Burley of police headquarters had called upon my employer for assistance in ferreting out any problem too much for his routine methods, and time had hung heavily on my hands. Not on Pinklin's, however; the man always found occupation for either his mind or his hands, or both. One of the rooms of his apartment had been fitted up as a first-class laboratory for his research work, and he had been working for tireless hours, which had extended into weeks and months, in perfecting an idea which permitted the sending of finger prints by telegraph.

We had just returned to the flat from having breakfast, and to my surprise he did not repair with eager haste to the laboratory as generally was the case.

"Yes, Thome," and he nodded, "I agree with you in welcoming one of our adventures. The finger-print system is completed, the last chart drawn, and the last table compiled. It is as near perfect as I can make it, and it is a success. Now that it is done, what could be better than for Sergeant Burley to give us a ring and call us into consultation?"

I knew that he was proud of the hard work which had netted the result of making it possible to send finger prints by telegraph, the system being a series of code numbers corresponding to a scaled chart; and, while I shared his justifiable pride, I personally was more interested in seeing him at work on "a case." But what was the use? The unusual in crime has to happen when it will; it can not be ordered to suit the convenience of an idle criminologist and his thrill-hungry assistant.

However, it happened more speedily than I would have dared hope. Pinklin had resigned himself to a day of inactivity and had gone to the easy-chair by the window to bury himself in some technical treatise, while I knocked about the room, fuming at the time dragging heavily past. I had just settled down with a magazine of light fiction, and had managed to get tolerably interested in the pages, when the telephone rang.

"Burley!" I exclaimed, leaping up with a hopeful hunch. "Burley's got a case for us!"

"More likely my book dealer," Pinklin West remarked with a smile. "He promised to call me up and let me know if he could get me a volume I've been wanting in the original French."

He was wrong, and my guess was right; hardly had I lifted down the receiver when the unmistakable tone of Sergeant Burley boomed over the wire —and I knew by the terseness of his speech that the reason for the call was no mere friendly reminder that he had not forgotten us. Evidently, he, too, had known my voice with its brief "Hello."

"'Lo Miller," came the deep bass. "West there? Good! Grab a taxi, you two, an' streak down to The Loop. I'm up against a world-beater."

"Is it a murder, Burley?" I demanded eagerly.

"So the doc from the coroner's office says, only—but that'll have to wait until you get here. Dead man's Victor Gaul, chemical firm Gaul & Whitson, y'know —ninth floor, Dort Buildin'. Poison case, the medico says, but don't waste no time gassin' about it. Get West here quick!"

Without waiting for my answer, knowing that we always came when a mystery called, the headquarters man had slammed up the receiver at the other end of the wire. I turned to Pinklin West who, calm where I was eagerly excited, deliberately closed his book with a marker and got almost leisurely to his feet.

"It's a case, then?" he murmured.

"Looks like murder, Burley says," I answered. "Victor Gaul, of——"

"Yes," West interrupted, "I know him; Gaul & Whitson, wholesale chemists and druggists."

"The coroner's man," I added, "thinks it's a poison case, and Burley seems badly stumped."

"Oh, of course. He never calls for us otherwise, Thome, but we can't very well blame him for that. Where did he say we were to go?"

"Dort Building. He's waiting for us. Ninth floor."

"Then Gaul must have died in his office; that's where the firm is located—on the ninth floor of the Dort Building. Nice old chap, Victor Gaul; he's been the head of that business for a good many years." He crossed the room and got his hat. "Well, let's be starting."

Down at the corner we hailed a passing taxi and were hurrying south on Clark Street, headed for The Loop and the most amazing case of the murder of Victor Gaul.

II.

As was Burley's custom, a guard of uniformed men had been thrown about the offices of the chemical company, on the ninth floor of the Dort Building, barring all exit or entrance. The headquarters sergeant had left word with the patrolman stationed out in the hall that we were to be admitted instantly upon our arrival, and so we brushed past half a dozen envious newspaper reporters who had been unable to gain admittance. Burley wasn't overpartial to reporters; he said they were always stealing his clews away from him.

The moment the police detective came hurrying toward us through the open space of the Gaul & Whitson offices, I knew by the expression of his face that he had struck a stone wall, and that he was without hope of even Pinklin West, who had unsnarled so many tangles for him, getting at the solution. Throwing up his hands in a gesture of despair, he motioned us within the railing and toward a big, flat-top, mahogany desk which occupied a central position of this space. Ten or twelve employees, two of them young women, were huddled about in various degrees of terror, and I saw that they were staring at the desk as if it were something of horror.

"West," Burley began in a hoarse whisper, "this one gets my goat—good. If you can solve it, then I'll have to hand it to you that you're the greatest detective that ever tackled a case.

"I'm no medico myself, but I'll stake my shield that Doctor Norton knows

what he's talking about, an' he says Gaul was poisoned."

Yes, I decided, knowing something about Dr. Norton's reputation as a toxicologist, Burley was in no danger of losing his shield; if Norton said it was poison, then it was.

Pinklin West's washed-out blue eyes examined the office, probably in search of the closed door which would mark the slain man's private sanctum.

"Where did it happen?" he asked in that calm, never-excitable voice of his.

"Here!" exploded Burley, his pudgy forefinger pointing to the desk chair. "Right here, man; that's the creepy thing about it. Gaul was murdered right here in plain sight of a dozen people, and no one saw it done!"

"Eh?" said West quickly; his interest had been fired by this remarkable premise.

"Suicide," I said; "of course."

"No," insisted Sergeant Burley, "not suicide. Doctor Norton is positive of that—absolutely positive."

"Did he say what poison?" Pinklin demanded.

"He said the action was unmistakably cyanide," answered the headquarters detective. "But there wasn't no glass or bottle or anything like that, and besides—well, he didn't drink nothin'. There's three persons can swear to that; they was lookin' straight at him. Jeffries, the bookkeeper, and——"

"We'll get to that in a minute," West interrupted. "You say it happened right out here in the open office? Where is the body?"

"Doctor Norton had it removed," Burley replied. "He said that he couldn't tell much about it until he had performed an autopsy, but little good that's goin' to do us. The nut we've got to crack is: How was Gaul killed with his whole office force lookin' on?"

"Yes," repeated Pinklin, "that's the nut we've got to crack. Cyanide? Hum!" His pale eyes were blinking a little more rapidly than was normal—a certain sign that his mind was working fast.

"Can you crack it?" asked Burley. Evidently, he was firmly convinced that at last he had called Pinklin West into a case which he would be unable to solve.

"I don't know, Burley; all I can do is try. Whether we succeed or not, remains to be seen. You have questioned every one, of course? You have permittd no one to leave the office? Things have been left precisely as you found them when you were called to the scene?"

"Yes to all them questions. Sure, you won't find nothin' touched. There wasn't any evidence to be disturbed, if that's what you mean. I'll tell you what they say; Jeffries, the bookkeeper, says——"

"If you don't mind, Burley," West interrupted quietly, "I'd like to have the story from the witnesses first-hand. Let's have a talk with Jeffries."

The headquarters man grumbled a little, as he always did when his own methods were tossed aside, and summoned the bookkeeper.

Jeffries proved to be the white-haired, stoop-shouldered old fellow whom I had noticed sniffling into a moist, crumpled handkerchief. His age was easily sixty, and one could hardly doubt that his grief was genuine. His eyes were red and swimming with fresh tears.

"Jeffries, here," offered Burley, "has been workin' for Gaul more'n twenty years, an' he's all cut up over this thing."

"Twenty-three years," corrected old Jeffries with a gulp, "and there wasn't a finer man ever lived than Mr. Gaul. Everybody loved him, and I can't understand——"

"No, not everybody," interrupted the headquarters man grimly. "There was somebody who hated him enough to poison him."

The old bookkeeper, wadding the moist handkerchief into one palm, rubbed his fingers over the back of a veined hand and shuddered.

"There—there must be some mistake," he quavered. "There couldn't—— Why, I was talking to him; I was looking right at him!"

"Tell us exactly what happened, Jeffries; tell us exactly what you saw," Pinklin West requested gently.

"It was about ten o'clock, sir," responded the old bookkeeper. "Business had been going on for about an hour. As you see, Mr. Gaul had no private office; he said that he had no secrets from anybody, and he liked to work better out here; and I guess he liked to keep an eye on things, too.

"He had called to me about an account that was past due, and I came to the edge of the railing there to talk to him. My hearing isn't so good as it once was. He was sitting there at the desk, chair sort of tilted back, his pipe in his mouth. He always smoked a pipe; he didn't like cigars, and he detested cigarettes—wouldn't let 'coffin-nails,' as he called them, be used in the office."

I measured the distance from the desk to the railing where Jeffries had stood; it was a good ten feet.

Jeffries went on: "As I said, I was looking right at him. While he was talking to me, his pipe went out, and he fired it up again. Just as he was blowing out a big puff of smoke from his mouth, something—something happened to him. He didn't cry out, just sort of went stiff in the chair—a convulsion I guess you would call it. The pipe fell out of his mouth, and the sparks showered all over the top of his desk. You can see here where some of them burned little holes into the papers."

Pinklin West nodded, and I looked down at the desk; the pipe, a stubby briar, lay no doubt in practically the same spot where it had fallen from between the dying man't teeth. I picked it up and sniffed; there was, in so far as I could detect, no odor except that of very strong tobacco. I offered it to Pinklin, but he did not seem interested in making an examination.

Besides the pipe was an opened book of matches such as are given away in any tobacco store. West sat down in Gaul's swivel-chair, one hand pinching absently at his chin as the other toyed carelessly with the matches.

"There were others who saw Mr. Gaul just as he died?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," and Jeffries nodded, "there was Miss Ashpaugh, one of the two stenographers. She was just coming over with a handful of letters that she had typed for Mr. Gaul. She was but a few steps behind me, approaching the gate. She can confirm what I have told you.

"And there was Bayless, the credit-manager; he was at his desk and happened to be looking this way." He pointed out the credit-manager's place; it was within full view of Gaul's railed-in throne. In fact, the head of the firm had arranged himself so that he had but to glance up and command a full view of the office and of every employee.

"That's right, West," put in Sergeant Burley; "all three of 'em tell the same story. Jeffries is only repeatin' what I already know, and what I could have told you."

"There is, I believe," said Pinklin, still addressing the bookkeeper, "no longer a Mr. Whitson?"

"Oh, no, sir; Mr. Whitson has been dead for almost fifteen years, and Mr. Gaul never took in another partner. He was planning, however, on making Mr. Charley a junior member of the firm on the first of the year."

"And who is Mr. Charley?" West wanted to know.

"Charley Gaul, sir; his nephew. He's not long out of college; he's just started to learn the business."

"I see. Mr. Gaul had no family?"

"He was a widower and childless."

"And his nephew, I take it, will be his heir?"

"I suppose so, sir; Mr. Gaul had never taken me into his confidence regarding his private affairs."

"The young un didn't come down to business to-day," spoke up Sergeant Burley. "We've telephoned to him, an' he's on his way to the office now."

West, nodding briefly, continued to question Jeffries:

"Frankly now, Jeffries, were Mr. Gaul and his nephew on the best of terms?"

"Oh, absolutely, sir; the best of terms. Mr. Charley was quite the apple of his uncle's eye. More like a father than an uncle to him—raised him, educated him, and fitted him out to step into the business."

Pinklin continued to toy with the opened book of matches which lay in front of him on the desk.

"In what department was young Gaul employed?" he wanted to know, and I could see that the old bookkeeper was distressed by this line of questioning, for it suggested the unpleasant thought that Charley Gaul was under suspicion for the death of his uncle.

"Well, sir," Jeffries answered, "he had worked around in all departments, learning all the branches of the business, you see." The old fellow's distress had turned into a faint show of indignation. "I—I hope you don't think that Mr. Charley——"

"Do you smoke?" broke in Pinklin West with apparent irrelevance.

The bookkeeper stared.

"Why—why yes, sir," he answered.

"Thome," Pinklin said to me, "give Mr. Jeffries one of your cigars. I can't accommodate him myself; don't use 'em."

Wonderingly, I complied with this perplexing request, and, even more wonderingly, the bookkeeper accepted it.

"Smoke up, Mr. Jeffries," said West, his tone almost a command, and he handed the old fellow the book of matches.

What was the reason for this strange procedure? I knew, of course, that Pinklin was on the trail of something; I knew that it was no mere idle whim that caused him to have me give the bookkeeper a cigar.

Rather dazed, under the spell of West's blinking gaze and quiet, commanding tone, Jeffries bit off the end of the cigar and, accepting the book of matches, struck a light. Did it mean that the harmless-looking book of matches offered a key to the solution of the poison mystery?

Nothing happened.

"That will be all, Mr. Jeffries," said Pinklin West, and the old man shuffled off, no doubt well convinced that this new detective who had been called into the case was mildly insane.

Sergeant Burley, who had watched this procedure from between slightly narrowed eyelids, gave a snort of derision.

"Stage stuff!" he grunted with just the trace of a sneer. "West, the whole thing is that I've got you up against something that's got you guessing, and you're making a bluff of seeing daylight. I'll bet you a ten spot that this is one case that you'll never solve."

"I never make bets like that, Burley," Pinklin West answered quietly, "but I can tell you now that this case is a lot nearer solution than you have any notion. Taking Doctor Norton's word for it that Mr. Gaul died of cyanic poisoning, I am almost positive how the poison was administered. In fact, I am positive; there can be but one possible explanation."

"The poison was in the tobacco!" I exclaimed.

"No. You must remember that Gaul had been smoking his pipe without any fatal effects, and cyanic attacks instantly; the snap of a finger, and it is

over. No, it wasn't the pipe nor the tobacco."

"What was the idea of pullin' that stunt of handin' old Jeffries a cigar?" gruffly inquired Sergeant Burley.

Pinklin West smiled faintly and shook his head.

"Wait and see," he answered.

III.

Cross-examination of the other witnesses was only a repetition of what we had learned from Jeffries; every male employee had a cigar pressed upon him, and there were so many that the contents of my pocket case was exhausted and Sergeant Burley's supply had to be tapped.

So far as questions revealed, the murdered man's nephew was a steady-going young fellow, down promptly between eight-thirty and nine every morning, and going home at the last stroke of the clock.

"I don't see why you keep on askin' questions about Charley Gaul for," grumbled the headquarters man. "He's the one person we know didn't have nothin' to do with this business. He wasn't even here, the youngster wasn't, an' that lets him out. What's the idea?"

Pinklin West leaned back in the chair where the head of the firm had met death, and his washed-out blue eyes blinked slowly.

"We have just been told, in one way or another," he answered, "that to-day is the first time in a year that the nephew has stayed away from the office for any reason. Doesn't it seem a trifle peculiar, my dear Burley, that he should have been indisposed to-day? Doesn't it smack of an effort to manufacture a complete alibi?"

Sergeant Burley tossed up his hands.

"But that's exactly what it is," he retorted, "an alibi—a perfect alibi. It lets him out so far as I'm concerned. The nephew couldn't have had anything to do with it."

"Ah!" murmured Pinklin. "That remains to be seen, my dear Burley; that remains to be seen. Don't you think it's about time Charley Gaul put in an appearance?"

The headquarters man dragged out a heavy, old-fashioned silver watch and nodded his head.

"Yes," he agreed, "he ought to be here any minute now. He lives out at a hotel on the South Side, same hotel with his uncle; it'll take him about an hour to make the trip into the office. But, confound it, West, you ain't got a shadow of a reason to suspect the kid; they've all told you that he and the uncle got along fine together."

"We'll have to wait and see about that," answered Pinklin.

Something like ten minutes longer we waited before the patrolman on guard at the office entered to tell us that "the dead man's nephey" was outside and wanted permission to come in.

"Sure," said Burley, "let 'im in."

A moment later we had our first glimpse of Charley Gaul, and I will admit to receiving a good impression—at the first glance. He was a tall, well-featured young man of, I guessed, twenty-five. It was only when I had a good look at his eyes that I reserved opinion concerning him. The eyes were too narrow for absolute frankness.

Pinklin West kept the chair by the desk, and I arose to give the nephew mine. His face was pale, and his hands trembled slightly; nothing surprising about that, considering the loss of an uncle who had been "more like a father" to him.

"Is—is this really true?" he asked huskily. "Uncle Victor is dead."

It was Pinklin West who took charge of the situation, giving Sergeant Burley a quick glance which was to tell the headquarters man that he wanted to handle the matter in his own way.

"Yes, Mr. Gaul," he answered quietly, "your uncle is dead. I presume

that you have been told over the phone what caused his death?"

"No," said Charley Gaul, "I was not told what caused his death. Was it acute indigestion. He was a victim of occasional attacks of that—gastritis, I believe."

"It was not gastritis, Mr. Gaul; your uncle was killed by a very deadly poison."

The young man half rose from his chair, his hands clutched about the chair-arms.

"Great heavens!" he cried. "You mean—you can't mean that he killed himself?"

"No, I don't mean that," answered Pinklin West. "There is even a more ugly word for it than suicide. Your uncle was murdered."

Charley Gaul collapsed weakly into his chair.

"Impossible!" he cried hoarsely. "Murdered! How—who——"

"That is something which remains to be proven," said Pinklin West in his quiet voice, his blue eyes on the nephew's face. "There's a great deal of mystery about it; your uncle's slayer was a very crafty man, Mr. Gaul, and he knew poisons. At least three persons in the office here saw your uncle in his last, agonized convulsion of death. Jeffries was standing there at the railing in conversation with him; one of the stenographers was in the act of approaching this enclosure, bringing him some typed letters. The credit-manager was looking this way. With three eyewitnesses, there can not be much doubt of it. Your uncle was leaning back in his chair, with this pipe of his between his teeth. He had been smoking just before."

"Yes, Uncle Victor always smoked at his desk." Charley Gaul was calm now. "He was a heavy pipe smoker. Go on, please."

"His pipe had gone out," continued Pinklin West. "He struck a match from this little book of safeties, was in the act of relighting the pipe, when—it was done. Since a cyanic poison was used, your uncle was quite dead before any one could reach him."

"Great Lord!" Charley Gaul whispered hoarsely. "You mean that some one had put poison in his tobacco?"

"Hardly," West replied. "Thome Miller, here, my assistant, suggested that possibility. But we must remember that he had already been smoking that same pipeful of tobacco."

"But how——"

"Just the problem that we are struggling with," said Pinklin, answering the unfinished question. "Of one thing we are certain, the person responsible was some one who knew something about chemicals, who had an expert knowledge."

"But the thing's impossible!" cried Charley Gaul. "There must be a mistake." The inflection of his voice, hoarse, strained, incredulous, entirely convinced me, and Burley gave me a quick nod which was as if to say: "Yeh, I know that West was barkin' up the wrong tree."

"So," continued Pinklin West, "the point of our attack must be motive. Can you, Mr. Gaul, suggest any employee who may have had a grudge, real or fancied, against your uncle?"

"No, he was loved from the office to the shipping room. Most of those working here have been employed for years; he treated them well, gave Christmas bonuses, and all that sort of thing. I don't think he had an enemy in the world—that is, so far as I know."

"And your relations with your uncle," went on Pinklin, "were, I presume, of the friendliest nature?"

Charley Gaul's head shot up.

"Confound you, are you trying to intimate——"

"I intimate nothing, Mr. Gaul; I have merely asked you a question."

The nephew subsided and bowed his head.

"Yes," he said, "of the most friendly nature." He paused for a moment. "I can't believe yet what you have told me is true; it seems incredible, utterly impossible."

"So it does," agreed Pinklin West, and the four of us lapsed into a silence which lasted for some minutes. Charley Gaul's nervous hands went to his pockets, fumbling absently for something, and found his cigarette case.

"But if it's really true," he added slowly, "the guilty man must be brought to book." He extracted a cigarette and tapped the end of it against the back of his hand.

"Yes," repeated Pinklin West in a colorless voice, "the guilty man must be brought to book." His fingers again were toying with the book of matches which lay there on the desk; as Charley Gaul put the cigarette between his lips and reached to his pockets again for a light, Pinklin suddenly leaned forward.

"Permit me," he murmured and, tearing off one of the paper-stick matches from its pasteboard cover, struck a light on the sandpaper striker, holding the flame toward young Gaul's face.

The simple movement of courtesy—offering a light—had a most astounding effect on Charley Gaul; his face became pasty white with terror, and he leaned back with such suddenness as to overturn the chair, sending him into a sprawling heap on the floor.

"No!" he cried hoarsely. "No!" His hand struck out wildly, knocking the flaming match from Pinklin West's fingers. Still holding the book of safety matches in his left hand, Pinklin got up and took an accusing step forward.

"By that action, Gaul," he said, his voice steely hard, "you have confessed. You are the murderer!"

The nephew had but half struggled up from the floor; still on his knees, a scream ripped out of his throat, and he began to fumble wildly in the pockets of his waistcoat. Pinklin West flung himself forward and pinned him to the floor.

"Quick, Burley!" he exclaimed. "Put the nippers on him. This young fiend must not be allowed to escape justice!"

Stirring himself from the daze of this sudden and dramatic dénouement, the headquarters man dragged out a pair of handcuffs and clicked them about Charley Gaul's wrists.

"I don't know how he done it," he growled, "but I know a guilty look when I see it. You've got the right man!"

"Yes, we've got the right man," said West, and then to the cringing prisoner: "Why did you kill him?"

Charley Gaul's body shook with terrified convulsions as a sob of self-pity rattled in his throat.

"Money!" he groaned. "It was money. I was playing the races; I'd been forging some notes. I knew that it was bound to come to light, that Uncle Victor would pitch me out without a dollar. He wasn't the kind that would forgive even me for a thing like that. It meant that I would lose the chance to inherit this business. I'd been hoping that I could clean up and square things, but I got in deeper all the time. The notes were coming due at the bank; they would be called. Uncle Victor's signature was on them—that I had traced through a piece of glass with an electric light underneath.

"I went crazy. I thought out a scheme. It didn't seem that it could fail. I doctored up that book of matches. They're the kind that my uncle always kept in his desk. I didn't doctor more than one book of them; a pipe smoker uses so many matches. He would use up eight or ten books of them during the day. I put the doctored matches in the drawer last night before I went home. This morning I played sick—two reasons for that: I wanted to be safe from any suspicion, and"—he

shuddered—"I didn't want to be here when—when he died."

Sergeant Burley and I stared questioningly, wondering how any one could poison a match so that it could kill a man.

"The more clever the crime," said Pinklin West, "the quicker the guilty man breaks down and confesses when it goes wrong. I have always found that to be the way."

"But how did you know?" I blurted.

"When Doctor Norton said cyanic poison had caused Gaul's death," answered Pinklin, "I knew that there could be little mistake about it. He is one of the greatest toxicologists in the country; he is expertly familiar even with the obscure and little-used poisons.

"There are several branches of the cyanide family. Cyanic acid is a liquid and, of course, would have to be swallowed. In that case, there would have been a container of some sort, a glass phial, perhaps. We know that such was not the case.

"Then there comes cyanogen; it is a grayish substance, coming in the form of salts. At a burning heat, it gasifies, and the fumes are instantly deadly. One whiff of it and—out! At the close of the war we were manufacturing poison gas with a cyanogen base.

"When we were told that Victor Gaul died while sitting in his chair lighting his pipe, the solution became more or less certain, in so far as method was concerned. It could not be the tobacco; Gaul had been smoking his pipe previous to his death. Therefore, there was but one explanation—the book of safety matches.

"Charley Gaul, here, had free access to the firm's chemical stock; it was, therefore, a simple matter for him to get hold of cyanogen. What he did was to impregnate the matches with the poison. When a light was struck, the heat gasified the cyanogen, and the fumes were drawn through Victor Gaul's pipe and into his mouth. The result could be nothing but instant death.

"I knew by the lack of hesitation with which the other male employees accepted a light for the smokes I pressed on them, that they knew nothing of the method used to accomplish Gaul's death, but—well, you saw the effect on the guilty man."

"Say!" I exclaimed. "If the matches killed Gaul, why didn't it have the same effect on the employees when they lighted their cigars?"

With a faint smile, Pinklin West struck a match from the book in his hand and, cupping the flame in his palms, held it close to his mouth. Then he reached into his pocket for another book, identical in appearance.

"Evidently, you did not see my bit of sleight-of-hand," he answered. "They are matches which are given away at any tobacco store; I had some of them myself; so have you. I merely dropped the poisoned matches into my pocket and, for the purpose of my experiment, substituted some which lived up to the name of being 'safety matches.' No one, not even the man who killed his uncle, was in the slightest danger."

And so was solved the Gaul poisoning case. Being a more or less impressionable person, I hesitate when I'm at the corner cigar store to purchase a cigar or a package of cigarettes and the clerk pushes over the counter one of those gratis books of safety matches, and generally I leave them where they are.

Spooky Hollow

by Carolyn Wells

Author of "Feathers Left Around," "Sinister Shadows," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

WHEN John Haydock comes to Greatlarch, the gorgeous estate of Homer Vincent at Hilldale, Vermont, he gives his name as "Henry Johnson." He is closeted with Vincent over an hour before dinner; he accepts an invitation to spend the night, and after dinner he and Vincent resume their discussion. The nature of Haydock's business is known only to Vincent and his sister, Anne.

In the morning Anne Vincent is found in her bed, dead of a stab wound. Vincent calls the police, and while he and his niece, Rosemary, listen, the local authorities question the servants. Haydock has not appeared for breakfast: an investigation discloses the fact that his bed has not been slept in. His hat and coat are in his room, but no trace of him can be found in the house or on the grounds.

CHAPTER V.

WHERE WAS JOHNSON?

ON the whole, Francine, the maid, made a good impression on Doctor Archer, Sheriff Lane, and Detectives Brewster and Brown. Though pert and saucy of appearance, she laid aside all such attitudes now and seemed desirous only to be helpful and dutiful.

"Snappy chit, but devoted to her mistress," was the way Brewster summed her up in his mind, and Brown contented himself with remarking: "Full of pep, but honestly grieved."

Brewster and Brown were themselves honest, hard-working detectives. Far from brilliant, woefully inexperienced, they felt that now at last their chance had come, and they were firmly resolved to make good. Brewster was big and burly, and of a slow-going mind, while Brown was small, wiry, and active, with what he considered a hair-trigger intellect. They had often rejoiced in the fact, as they saw it, that they thus complemented each other, and they felt that their teamwork would be admirable should they ever get a chance to try it out. And now their time had come.

Eagerly, they listened to Doctor Archer's inquiries, carefully they remembered the answers and frequently gave each other astute glances indicative of great mental activity.

"Now," said Lane, "let's take up next what we know of Miss Vincent. Did any one hear any sound from her or from her room during the night?"

All present declared they had heard no sounds from Miss Vincent's room.

"There is a night watchman?" Doctor Archer asked.

"Yes," replied Mellish, the butler, who saved his master in every way he could. "But, if he had heard or seen anything unusual, he would have reported it first thing this morning."

"Leave that for the moment, then. Now, who went first to Miss Vincent's door this morning?"

"Perhaps I did," said Francine.

"Why do you say perhaps?" demanded Lane.

"Because how can I tell?" returned Francine, wide-eyed at such stupidity.

"Any one might have been there before me; indeed, some one must have been there before me—the villain who killed my dear lady."

"Very well," said Lane, "go ahead. What time did you go there?"

"At something after eight, monsieur. Always, Miss Vincent rings for me earlier than that—about seven-thirty, maybe. This morning she did not do so, and I waited until eight; then I went and hovered near her door, wondering at her sleeping so late. I listened closely, and, hearing no sound, I ventured to turn the knob; but the door was locked and would not open. I called softly, then louder, and then, listening intently, I heard no sound of Miss Vincent moving about. I feared she was indisposed, and I greatly desired to get in to give her assistance, if need be."

"What did you do?"

"But, naturally, I ran down the stairs for help. Forgetting my discipline, I ran into the breakfast room, where Mr. Vincent and Miss Rosemary were, and I told them of the unusual condition. And, though not alarmed, Mr. Vincent was concerned. And, with Mellish, we all came upstairs and broke in the door."

"Who broke it in?"

"Mellish and I together," Homer Vincent answered for himself. "The door is a light, temporary structure. My sister preferred it to the original heavy oak door. We burst it in—in fact, it opened so easily Mellish was thrown to the floor. I went quickly to my sister's bed, and the first glance told me the truth. I saw in an instant that she had been killed—murdered.

"I admit I almost lost my consciousness. My senses reeled, and I fell back involuntarily. But I quickly pulled myself together, for my young niece was present, and forced myself to lean over the body and discover if life was surely extinct. It was; the flesh was cold to my touch. I ordered Mellish to hold my niece back, as I wanted to spare her the awful sight, but she insisted on looking at her aunt, and for a moment we gazed together on the terrible scene. I think there is no more to tell. Finding I could do nothing for my poor sister, assuring myself that she was positively beyond human aid, I fear I gave way to selfish grief for a few moments. Then I roused myself to a sense of duty, and ever since I have been trying to do what is right and wise in the matter.

"But I am all unversed in the course the law should take, or in the manner of efforts that should be made to find the murderer and avenge the crime. Will you, therefore, gentlemen, take the case in charge and do, or advise me to do, whatever is right and best? Let one thing be understood:

The murderer must be found. Spare no time, pains, or expense. I stand ready to do anything I can; but, as I said, I am ignorant of the proper procedure, and I desire to relegate the work to more experienced hands. You think, do you not, Doctor Archer, that the criminal can be found and brought to justice?"

"That is not quite in my province, Mr. Vincent. The inquiry is my duty, but the real detective work must be done by men skilled in such things."

Brewster and Brown looked duly important and capable, but they offered no hint of their conclusions so far.

"Do you think, Mr. Vincent," Lane asked in his ponderous way, "that your sister's death could have been a suicide?"

"I should say positively not," Vincent replied slowly, "except for the fact that she died in a locked room. I can see no way that a murderer could escape and leave that door locked behind him. Yet, so far from probability is the idea of suicide that I am forced to believe it was a murder, however impossible such a theory may seem. But all this business of theorizing and of deducing and collecting evidence is so foreign to

my nature and to my experience that I cannot pretend to decide any such questions."

"What weapon was used? Was any found?" asked Brewster, looking at Vincent.

"That I don't know," he replied, looking in his turn at Doctor Archer. "Did you find any, doctor?"

"No," and Archer seemed stern. "There was none in evidence. Was any such thing removed before my arrival?"

"Of course not," said Vincent. "Who would do such a thing as that?"

"Did you see any knife or dagger, Mellish? or you, Francine?" Archer asked of the servants.

But every one present denied having seen a weapon of any sort.

"Then," said Brewster, "it must have been murder."

"But the door was locked," Brown reminded him, "so it must have been suicide."

"Those statements are both true superficially," Lane said, "but, since they contradict each other, either or both may be untrue. One must be. Such points can only be settled after much more investigation than has yet been made. Shortly, we will adjourn to the scene of the crime and gather what evidence we may up there. Just now, I'd like more information regarding this stranger, this Mr. Johnson who visited here last night, and who, I understand, is now missing."

"That's one of the strangest features," said Lane. "Please tell us all about him, Mr. Vincent."

Rosemary, who had sat quietly listening to the talk, now showed signs of curiosity. She wished herself to learn more of this strange visitor, but the conversation about her aunt had filled her soul with only horror and grief.

Rosemary Vincent was of a self-contained, self-repressed nature. Though her uncle was kind, even generous, to her in many ways, yet their tastes were not congenial, and their ways were utterly dissimilar. Indeed, this mutual sorrow that had just come to them, had seemed to draw them together more closely than they had ever been before. And, though Rosemary had earlier that morning inquired concerning the mysterious Mr. Johnson, she had received no satisfaction, and now she hoped to learn details.

"I had hoped not to be obliged to tell you of his business here," Vincent said slowly, "but his strange disappearance seems to make it advisable that I should do so. Yet"—he still hesitated—"I cannot convince myself that the man is really missing. I can't help thinking he is about the place or in the house somewhere. He was so intensely interested in the architecture of this house, he was so eager to go into every nook and cranny of it, may it not be possible that he has fallen asleep in some unused room, or perhaps even met with an accident while climbing from one place to another?"

"Are there such dangerous places?" asked Lane.

"Oh, yes, at least they might be dangerous to an adventurous stranger. You see, there are upwards of fifty rooms in the house, and there are turret rooms, to enter which one must step out on the leads; also, there are dark, dungeonlike rooms down in the subcellar where, if one were to stumble and fall, perhaps breaking a leg or even spraining an ankle, his cries might not be heard by the household."

"You think Mr. Johnson, a transient guest, would go down in your subcellar alone, at night, in utter darkness?" and Lane looked astounded.

"I merely suggest it," Vincent said, looking harassed, "because he was apparently out of his bedroom all night, and because he showed such extraordinary interest in the construction of the house."

"Very well, Mr. Vincent, if you wish to wait until further search can be made for the gentleman, before revealing the secret of his errand here, we will wait. You had better send some of your people to look over the house at once. But, in the meantime, I will ask you for the details of his arrival, and a description of the man."

"He came here yesterday afternoon," Vincent began slowly. "He sent in no card, but told my butler his name was Henry Johnson, and he wished to see me on important and private business. I rarely see callers who are not known to me, but I was not busy at the moment, and I had him shown in. His errand was really a simple business proposition, which involved a large investment of money if I saw fit to take it up. I called my sister down to consult with us, as her fortune is about the same as my own. We usually made our investments together. I will tell you the full details of this business plan later, if Mr. Johnson cannot be found. If he does turn up, I feel sure he would prefer the matter kept confidential.

"Well, Mr. Johnson proved to be a fairly agreeable guest, though not at all distinguished in any way. As we had not come to final decisions, I invited him to remain over night. Also, as my sister and I had just about concluded to accept his propositions, and as the man was so enthralled with Greatlarch, I invited him to remain here a week and enjoy the beauties of the place."

"He was with you all the evening?"

"After dinner, he sat with us in my own private room, until our plans were pretty well made regarding the venture he proposed. Then my sister grew weary and concluded to retire, all three of us agreeing to draw up contracts and settle the business finally in the morning."

"And you went upstairs with your sister?"

"Yes, as I always do. The doctor prescribes a certain sleeping draught for her, which must be carefully measured. I have no doubt of her carefulness and accuracy, but, to be on the safe side, I have always measured the medicine myself. Moreover, my sister appreciated my little courtesy of escorting her to her room, so I have always made it a practice. Sometimes I remain for a little chat, but last night, having a guest, I went downstairs again after saying good night."

"You rejoined Mr. Johnson?"

"Yes. I found him wandering about the halls, rapt in admiration of the choice marbles, of which, it seems, he is a connoisseur. I led him about through many of the rooms, even going with him nearly to the top of the house; there are nine stories, counting the basements. As we came down from the upper floors, we reached the room destined for his use. It is one of the south rooms.

"He duly admired it, and, after asking him if he had everything he wanted for the night, and being assured that he had I bade him good night and left him there, telling him, however, that if he wished to prowl about he was at liberty to do so. In this house no one is surprised or alarmed to hear footfalls during the small hours. We are all wakeful and frequently go up or down stairs on various trifling errands."

"And you heard Mr. Johnson prowling about in the night?"

"No, I can't say that I did. Yet he may have done so, for the rugs are thick and soft, and with care one may make no noise."

"Then the last you saw of this man was when you left him in his bedroom?"

"Yes, that was the last I saw of him. He was in good spirits, for he had achieved his purpose in coming here. He was satisfied with the agreement we had come to, and he looked forward to the morning when we would sign the

final contracts; also, when he would remain as my guest for a time."

"And then, this morning, he has disappeared?"

"He is not here, certainly, but I can't think it is a mysterious disappearance. He may have gone for a very early morning walk and met with some untoward accident. Or he may have remembered some important business matter and walked down to the village to telegraph, or something of that sort. I only suggest these things, because they are to my mind more probable than that the man has voluntarily or purposely gone away. Yet there may be a mystery about it, and it may be we shall never see him again. Those things I trust the detectives will delve into."

Vincent leaned back in his chair, looking not so much physically wearied with the conversation as mentally and nervously exhausted by the strain of the situation.

"What does Johnson look like?" Lane asked.

"Describe him, Mellish," Homer Vincent said, feeling he could delegate this task to another.

"Well," the butler said, speaking slowly, but concisely, "he is a medium-size man and a medium-weight man. He's well enough shaped, but he has no carriage——"

"Carriage?" interrupted Lane.

"Yes, sir; carriage, I said. Meaning he don't bear himself with any distinguishment, as a gentleman should."

A gleam of amusement passed across Vincent's face at this, but he immediately resumed his look of weary sadness.

"Not but what he knew how to behave proper. He was all right at the table, and that. But I should say he is not really an aristocrat."

"Don't be too severe, Mellish," Vincent admonished him. "I think Mr. Johnson had good manners."

"Good manners, yes," Mellish granted, "but, well, he was lacking in cultural background."

Some of the hearers stared at this phrase from the butler's lips, but those of the household knew Mellish's trick of picking up phrases overheard at his master's table and later using them, either rightly or wrongly, in his own conversation.

Vincent smiled outright, and even Rosemary's sorrowful face showed amused appreciation.

Lane repeated the phrase in bewilderment.

"Cultural background!" he exclaimed. "What do you mean?"

"What I say," returned the unabashed Mellish. "Mr. Johnson, I feel sure, is not accustomed to mingle in the best of social circles. He has no phrases or allusions in his speech that betoken the college man or the student of life and literature."

"Perhaps you'd better confine yourself to his physical description, Mellish," Vincent suggested, "and omit your opinions of his mentality."

"Yes, sir. Then, Mr. Johnson is a very dark-faced man—dark hair, eyes, and skin. He wears a small black mustache, and under it his white teeth gleam like those of some ferocious animal. His countenance is what may be called sinister—yes, sir, sinister. In a word, Mr. Henry Johnson has the face of a murderer."

Mrs. Mellish gave a sudden gasp, Rosemary turned white, and Homer Vincent stared at his butler.

"Yes, a murderer," Mellish repeated, "and he's the villain what did for our Miss Anne! How can it be otherwise? In comes a stranger, has secret dealings with master and Miss Anne—him all the time looking like a murderer, if ever a man did! Comes morning, he's fled, his bed not touched, his hat and coat left behind him, and the dear lady dead in her bed! What else could be the exclamation?"

Mellish's habit of miscalling a word provoked no smile this time, for everybody was startled at his idea and was turning it over mentally with deep interest.

At last, Doctor Archer said coldly: "Can any one suggest a motive for such a deed on the part of Mr. Johnson?"

"No, and I can't think of him as the criminal," said Vincent thoughtfully. "And yet, if Johnson never appears again, it does seem a way to look."

"Of course it's a way to look!" Brown cried eagerly. "The only way to look as yet. Who else could get into the house, with the night watchman on duty? Who else is a possible suspect in a house of devoted servants and loving relatives? Why else would Johnson disappear? What else would explain his unused bed? A man doesn't wander about the whole night, admiring house decorations, however beautiful!"

"All true, Brown," said Brewster slowly, "but we must get more data before we assume anything. This man's room, now. Much could doubtless be learned from examination of his belongings. Had he any luggage?"

"A kit bag," Mellish informed. "A new one, not overly large. I laid out his night things—right and proper enough, but not elaborate or fine. And all new."

"That's always suspicious," declared the quick-witted Brown. "When a man has a lot of new things, it means he wants to conceal his identity."

"But Johnson didn't," Vincent told them. "He told his name and address straightforwardly enough. He had to, for us to come to a business agreement."

"Yes, that's so," and Brown looked a little crestfallen. "Go on, Mellish, as to his kit. Anything more personal than clothing and toilet things?"

"Not as I recollect. But the room hasn't been touched, sir. You can go up and deduce it whenever you wish."

Mellish was sure of his word this time.

"Let's go now, Brewster!" cried Brown. "The fellow may come back any minute."

Brewster and Brown went up to the room in question, while the others remained downstairs. The pair found the windows to be of moderate width, but, owing to the thickness of the stone wall, they were very deep. Brown leaned far out of one and, drawing back into the room, informed Brewster that nobody could get in or out by that means. The room was on the third floor, and the stone wall was unscalable.

"Well, Pighead," Brewster returned amiably, "nobody has suspected Friend Johnson of making his exit otherwise than by this door. Why the fuss about the window?"

"But how did he get out of the house by the front door without being seen by the watchman? If he could have made any other get-away, it would simplify matters a lot."

"Don't hope to simplify matters yet, my son. This is a stupendous case——"

"Don't talk like that parrot-tongued butler! Stupendous is a silly word. But the case is a corker! I'll admit that."

"Yes, that's what I meant by stupendous. Now, as you can see for yourself, there's absolutely nothing to be learned from this bag or its contents. It isn't unpacked at all—it's just as the man left it. Nothing in it but a change of underclothing, a pair of socks, a time-table, a clothes brush——"

"Here are a few things on the dresser," Brown said, "but nothing personal. See, the brushes are plain black rubber, without monogram or initials. Here in the top drawer we see three or four clean handkerchiefs, a necktie and a pair of gloves. Doubtless the good Mellish put these here by way of arranging his wardrobe."

"Yes, of course. Not a thing marked,

not a thing personal or different from hundreds of other men's belongings."

"Here's his hat and coat. Old Sherlock would size him up perfectly just from the hat alone."

"Well, I can't. I don't see anything but a plain black derby, this season's style, new—like everything else—and bought in New York. Small help in that."

"And his coat is no better. New, too, bought also in New York, at a good shop. Does the fellow hail from New York?"

"I don't know. Mr. Vincent can tell us that. But I'll say Johnson is the one to look to as a potential murderer, at any rate. Think so?"

"Yes, but he doesn't seem to be a man of any forceful personality so far."

"That's the beauty of it! You see, if he is the murderer he would come here all togged out in clothes and things, new and unmarked, just to prevent the disclosure of his identity."

"Something in that, by Jove! Now, if we can circumvent his bright idea—I mean, find some purely personal thing that he has overlooked—we'll hoist him with his own petard!"

"Well, here's the thing! See, an atomizer! Isn't that what you call these little sprayers? It was on the wash stand."

Both looked at the glass container and its black rubber spray with interest.

"Good as far as it goes," said Brewster. "Where's the bottle of medicine that belongs with it?"

"Don't see any. Well, I'll leave it where we found it. Let's go back downstairs."

CHAPTER VI.

THE WILD HARP.

MELLISH had detailed two of the servants to search the house and grounds thoroughly for the missing Johnson. This was easily done, for the men were familiar with all the unused rooms and all the dark passages and dungeonlike spaces in the cellar and subcellar. They returned with the report that there was positively no one concealed in the house and no sign of any one about the grounds.

"It's clear enough to me," said Doctor Archer, "that the missing man is the criminal we are in search of. Had he met with an accident, he would have been found, even though injured or dead. As it is, he has evidently disappeared of his own volition and intentionally. What can we assume, then, but that he is the murderer and has fled?"

"Then, Mr. Vincent," Lane said, "I think you should now tell us all you know about the man and what business brought him here."

"Willingly," Homer Vincent answered. "But," he added, "I cannot conceive why he should have killed my sister, or how he accomplished it."

"That is for us to discover," Lane said a little pompously. "But, first, Doctor Archer, how long do you judge Miss Vincent had been dead when you arrived?"

"That is the most surprising part of it," Archer replied. "It is not often possible to affirm positively as to that matter, but, allowing a wide margin of probability, I feel sure that death occurred not more than three hours before I made the examination of the body."

Vincent looked at the speaker with an amazed face.

"Why," he exclaimed, "that man would mean that my sister was killed only about an hour before we broke into her room!"

"That is my report," Archer said decidedly. "As I say, it is hard to tell with certainty, but death must have occurred as late as seven o'clock this morning."

"Then," said Mellish, who in the stress of the occasion was joining in the

conversation, "that man, that murderer, waited till Hoskins went off duty, and then he killed Miss Anne and immejitly made himself scarce! You'll never see him again!"

"But why—why would he kill her?" Vincent persisted. "However, if he did, he's the man we want, and he must be found. I'll tell you all I know about him. In fact, I have told you all, except the nature of his business here. It was this. He claims to have discovered or invented a way to make what are known as synthetic rubies. This is not unheard of among chemists, and the results of attempts so far are well known to lapidaries and to jewelers. But Johnson declared that his process was so far above and beyond all others in point of merit and value, that if he could make and market his wares it would mean a revolution in the jewel business and a colossal fortune for the inventor and his backer. For, of course, his plan was for me to finance the project, he putting his knowledge and experience against my money investment. Then he proposed we divide the profits evenly. This, in a nutshell, is the gist of his business here. I am not one who is easily persuaded to invest in an unknown venture, but the way he talked proved to me that he knew his subject thoroughly, and the proofs he showed of success already attained made me give the matter deep consideration.

"I called my sister into the discussion, not only because I wished to give her an opportunity to share in the undertaking if she chose, but also because I place great reliance in her good judgment and sound advice. Somewhat to my surprise, she was enthusiastic over the plan and wanted to put in a large sum of money."

"Does it, then, require such an outlay to attain the desired end?" asked Archer, greatly interested.

"Yes, and I was convinced of it by the statistics and verified data that Mr. Johnson showed me. He also had with him two rubies which he had himself manufactured, and which a leading jewelry firm had declared genuine stones. I have those still in my possessions, in my safe, and I will show them to you whenever you like. My sister was entranced with their beauty and luster. After our afternoon confab my sister wore down to dinner a fine and perfect ruby of her own, for the purposes of comparison. I could see no difference between the real and the false."

"So you decided to finance his project, Mr. Vincent?" Brewster asked respectfully.

"I had practically so decided, but we were to confer further this morning, and if we agreed on certain unsettled points in the contract, I was quite ready to sign it, and so was my sister. It meant a large outlay of money for laboratories and materials, but we were firmly assured we would get it back many times over. That, Doctor Archer, was the business which brought Henry Johnson to my door, and if I hesitated to make it public it was because I felt a certain duty to him. Since he has so surely disappeared, and since there is reason to believe him a criminal, of course I am absolved from my promise of secrecy."

"Where is Miss Vincent's ruby?" asked Brown suspiciously. "Maybe he took that with him."

Vincent looked startled.

"She had it on when I bade her good night," he said, thinking back. "She always cares for it herself. Call Francine, Mellish."

The maid appeared, and Vincent questioned her concerning the jewel. "But yes," she answered, "Miss Vincent had it on last evening. When disrobing, she put it in her wall safe, as usual. Is it not there?"

"Go see," directed Vincent. "You can open it?"

"Oh, yes, Miss Vincent trusted me with the combination."

"I'll just go along," Brown said, and the two left the room.

"I am frightened to go in," said Francine as they reached the threshold.

"Why?"

"Miss Anne—she is there, and yet not there!"

"Well, she can't hurt you! Come along. Are you superstitious?"

"No—yes, I am! And last night the wild harp played! Did you know that?"

"What's the wild harp?"

"It's a spirit harp played by phantom fingers. The fingers, monsieur, of the dead lady——"

"Miss Vincent?"

"Oh, no, no—the lady who was long time ago dead—in this very room—this same room, monsieur! And again a deed of blood!"

"I see; you mean Mrs. Lamont."

"Yes, Madame Lamont. She was murdered or she killed herself—it is not known which—and of a truth she often plays the wild harp, and always there follows disaster."

"H'm! Interesting! And where is the harp? In the music room?"

"No, monsieur, it is out in the dismal—the black thicket, back of the temple that is her tomb. There is the wild harp, there among the desolation, the somber shadows, the sloughing pines, where the gloom is deepest—there the Lady Lamont walks by herself and moans or plays wailing strains on the wild harp."

"Tell me more about this some other time, Francine. We're sent on an errand, you know. Come on in. Don't be foolish."

With shuddering glances toward the still figure on the bed, Francine followed the detective into the room.

A guard stationed outside the door said nothing and made no move.

At Brown's command, Francine tried to open the small safe in the wall, but her fingers trembled so that she could scarcely control them.

"What a baby you are!" cried Brown, though his glance at the pretty French girl was not severe. "Tell me the letters. I'll do it."

"No, it is my trust," and, whirling the dial, Francine at last threw open the safe door.

"It is gone!" she cried. "The great ruby is gone! All else is here. Yes, here is the diamond cross and the emerald bracelet. Only the ruby is missing. The beast! The murderous beast! I knew he was the bad one! His blackness—ugh!"

More by gestures than by words did Francine express her detestation of the man, and her distress at the discovery of the loss.

"You're sure, Francine?" Brown persisted.

"Oh, yes, always the ruby reposed in this case. See? Now, the case is empty!"

"Well, I'm not overly surprised. Johnson is certainly the villain! Come on, we must go down and report."

Francine closed and locked the safe, and, dabbing at her eyes with a minute handkerchief drawn from her foolish little apron pocket, she went obediently downstairs.

Brewster heard of the stolen ruby with a certain feeling of satisfaction. It was all in keeping that the maker of synthetic rubies should purloin a real one, even at the price of becoming a murderer thereby.

"Johnson's your man," he declared. "All we've got to do now is to nab him. And that's not so hard as you may think. Mr. Vincent has his address, and sooner or later the man must return to his home, even if secretly. We'll get him!"

"I can't understand it." Vincent looked bewildered. "How did he do it?

How did he get the safe open? How did he kill my sister? It is all too unbelievable, too mysterious——"

"It is!" declared Rosemary, her attitude of sorrowful dejection suddenly giving way to a burst of indignation. "That was to be my ruby! Antan left it to me in her will. She told me so!"

No one thought the girl mercenary, or criticized her for this speech. It was natural that the news of the theft should call forth such regret from the one whose property it was meant to be.

"Poor child," said her uncle, "that is true. My sister did intend for you to have the jewel. Will troubles never end, Rosemary?"

"Oh, uncle, I fear they have only just begun. I—I heard the harp last night——"

She stopped as a shade of annoyance crossed her uncle's face. Homer Vincent always frowned at mention of the mysterious harp. He declared there could be no truth in the tales about it, that no sounds were ever heard from the dense thicket that the townsfolk had dubbed "Spooky Hollow."

Nor was it an inappropriate name. On either side of the marble temple were beautiful pine trees and larches, and a background of these threw out the shining whiteness in fine relief. But, farther back still, was a deep thicket of lower growth, dwarfed trees, tangled shrubs, and vines, marshy swamp ground that, after a long rain, showed dark pools of ooze and murky patches of soggy ground. Lower than the rest of the estate, it sloped still farther downward to a deep ravine, which, filled with a wild growth, was so picturesque, and also so difficult of access that Homer Vincent had put off clearing it out to a future time that had not yet arrived.

The unhindered growth of the trees and the rank and luxuriant undergrowth had, of course, taken place during the long years that the house stood vacant, and it was also during this period that the term "Spooky Hollow" came into use.

Many stories were current of weird sounds heard from the hollow, of ghostly shapes seen flitting there, of mysterious lights flaring for a moment now and then. Many of the townspeople pooh-poohed these stories, but there were many more who believed the reports.

When the Vincents first came it had been hard to persuade servants to remain with them. But enormous wages and tempting conditions had brought many permanent retainers, and Mrs. Mellish's wise government and kindly heart had secured others, so that now a vacancy on the staff was besieged by applicants.

Yet tales persisted, of hauntings and apparitions. Prominent among them were the stories of a phantom harp that was played upon only on dark nights, and that gave forth long, wailing strains as of a soul in anguish. As it was a fact that Mrs. Lamont met a violent death in her room, the same one Anne Vincent had occupied, it was not strange that this harp music was attributed to her restless spirit.

Anne Vincent herself had taken no interest in the ghost stories, her hard-headed practicality refusing to credit a word of them. But she had reluctantly admitted having heard the harp once or twice, though afterward declaring it must have been her imagination.

Rosemary was uncertain whether she believed in the spooks of Spooky Hollow or not. She had heard, or had thought she heard, the wild harp, but she was never inclined to talk on the subject, and indeed, except among the servants, it was not often discussed at Greatlarch.

And so, when Rosemary declared she had heard the harp the night of her aunt's death, Homer Vincent looked at her in astonishment.

"Rosemary," he said, "I beg of you —at such a time——"

"But, uncle, I did—I did hear it just after I came in."

"At what time did you come in?" he asked, and then poor Rosemary wished she had not spoken.

But he was quite evidently awaiting an answer, so the girl said falteringly: "I'm afraid I was a little late. I didn't mean to be."

"How late?" asked Vincent inexorably.

"After midnight," and the girl's appealing eyes seemed to beg him not to reprimand her then and there.

Nor did he. With a slight sigh, he merely said: "You know my wishes, Rosemary. I am sorry you so persistently disregard them."

"You came home at midnight, Miss Vincent?" said Brewster, hoping to glean information of some sort.

"Yes; I dined with a friend over on Spruce Hill Road, and she sent me home in her motor. I left the car at our avenue and walked to the house."

"In order to conceal the fact of your late return," observed Vincent.

"Yes, uncle," Rosalie admitted, and her brown eyes lowered their gaze before his reproachful stare.

But Brewster went on: "Tell me, Miss Vincent, did you see or hear anything unusual when you entered the house?"

"Nothing at all," she replied. "I had my own night key, but I did not use it, as Hoskins had not yet locked the front door."

Brown looked at her closely.

"Miss Vincent," he said, "you did not come directly into the house. You walked around the northwest tower and back before coming in at the front door."

The girl's face expressed utter amazement.

"That is quite true," she said, "but how ever did you know it?"

Rosemary's face betokened merely surprise, not alarm, but Brown continued to quiz her.

"You paused at the window of that tower, and stood there some moments. Why did you do that?"

His eyes narrowed as he looked at her, and his voice was curiously tense.

Rosemary rather resented this catechism, and then she quickly realized that the detectives had a right to question her, and, moreover, that she must tell the truth.

"Tell me how you know I did that, and I'll tell you why I did it," she returned.

Susceptible young Brown was fascinated by the charm of the appealing eyes and the piquant little face, animated now by curiosity.

"Not a difficult bit of deduction," he said. "I saw footprints in the snow along the front portico and round the tower when I came this morning. They were made by slender, feminine shoes, and I think now they were yours."

"I daresay," said Rosemary, indifferent now that the mystery was explained. "Well, I stepped around there, because I saw by the light that my uncle was probably there. And I wanted to size up my chance of getting into the house unnoticed."

Homer Vincent looked at her with disapproval, but Brown suppressed a chuckle.

"Not really afraid of the old man," he silently decided. "Guess his bark is worse'n his bite."

"What was your uncle doing?" asked Brewster casually.

"He was looking over some papers, and he had something in his hand that glittered when——"

"The two synthetic rubies that Mr. Johnson left with me," Vincent explained. "I will answer queries pertaining to myself, if you please."

Brewster felt a little abashed. Homer

Vincent had a gift of making people feel abashed when he chose.

"May I see those rubies, Mr. Vincent?" asked Lane.

"Certainly. I'll fetch them," and Vincent left the room.

"Did it look like a ruby, the object your uncle was holding?" Brewster inquired of Rosemary.

The girl looked at him and instinctively disliked his manner.

"My uncle prefers that questions about himself should be addressed to him," she said coolly, and again Brown had hard work to repress a smile of amusement at his colleague's discomfiture.

The two detectives worked harmoniously and in unison, but there was a slight feeling of rivalry that was, perhaps, not to be wondered at. Moreover, both of them were greatly impressed with the gravity of the case, the magnificence of the house, and, not least, by the winning personality of Rosemary Vincent.

"Then proceed with your own story, Miss Vincent," Brewster said a little curtly. "After looking in on your uncle, did you at once enter the house?"

"Yes, I thought from his manner he was meaning to stay where he was for some time. So I went back to the front door and softly opened it and slipped in. Well, of all things—if Uncle Homer didn't start that very minute to go upstairs! I was so afraid he'd see me, I scuttled behind one of the big pillars in the hall and waited till he passed me. I scarcely dared breathe! But he didn't hear me; he went on up the staircase, and——"

"And you followed after a discreet interval."

"Well, yes; but in that interval I went to the dining room and ate a bit of luncheon that Mellish had left there for me."

A smile of respectful affection crossed the face of the butler as he regarded the girl.

"But you had just come from a dinner party!"

"Oh, but dinner was at seven-thirty, and since then we had danced till after midnight, and had had no other refreshments."

"I see. Well, then, after your supper you went upstairs?"

Rosemary suddenly saw that she was practically on the witness stand. This did not disturb her; it only served to make her more careful of her statements.

"Yes," she said slowly. "I went upstairs, and, as it is my habit to stop in my aunt's room to say good night if she is awake, I listened at her door. But her regular, deep breathing told me that she was asleep, so I went on to my own apartments."

"You did not know Mr. Johnson was in the house?"

"No, I had no way of knowing that."

"You saw the night watchman as you came in?"

"Not as I came in, but, while I was in the dining room, Hoskins looked in. We nodded at each other, and he went on."

"May I see Hoskins?" Lane asked abruptly.

Mellish went to summon the watchman, who, though usually asleep at this hour, was still in the servants' sitting room, gossiping over events. He came back with Mellish and was ready, even anxious, to answer questions.

"Yes, sir," he informed them, "I saw Miss Rosemary a-eatin' of her little supper, and I went on about my business."

"Did you see Mr. Johnson walking through the house or on the grounds during the night?"

"That I did not, or I'd reported it, you may be sure."

"Is it necessary to report the wanderings of a guest of the house?"

"Well, I've never seen this Mr. John-

son they tell of, and if I'd 'a' seen him outside the house I'd hardly taken him for a guest. We ain't never had guests as did that. But if I'd 'a' seen him a-walkin' about inside, like as not I'd 'a' supposed he was a visitor and let it go at that. You can't tell just what you'd do in such cases, lessen you're there on the spot."

"Then you saw no sign of anybody at all?"

"No, sir. After Miss Rosemary went upstairs, I saw and heard no human bein' till the stroke of seven sent me in to breakfast. That is, no human, sir."

"You mean to say you saw or heard something supernatural?"

"That's it, sir; the wild harp. She broke loose long about two or three o'clock, and such a wailin' sound you never heard!"

"Hoskins," Homer Vincent spoke as he came into the room again, "you are too sensible to talk like that. There is no truth in those stories of a wild harp."

"Have it your own way, sir," and Hoskins cheerfully accepted the mild rebuff.

"There are the rubies, gentlemen," Vincent said, laying two gleaming, crimson stones on the table.

"What beauties!" cried Doctor Archer. "Do you mean to tell me these are synthetic? And made by that man, Johnson?"

"So he affirmed. Of course, there'd be no sense in his making a false statement of that sort."

"Oh, uncle, they're wonderful!" exclaimed Rosemary. "Can't I have one of these now that Antan's ruby is gone?"

"Oh, Miss Rosemary, don't think about foolish gewgaws with your poor aunt lying dead up above us!" Mrs. Mellish showed a horrified surprise on her round, rosy face. "And you gentlemen may search all you wish, you may do all the detective stunts you can pull off, but never will you see that Johnson man again, and never will you learn any more about poor Miss Anne's death than you know this minute! For I heard the wild harp last night, and it was a funeral dirge it played. The dear lady was killed by a haunt, that she was! Who else could get into her locked room? Who else could sperrit away Mr. Johnson? Tell me that, now! She chose for her own the haunted room, and she paid the penalty—did poor Miss Anne!"

CHAPTER VII.

UNCLE AND NIECE.

THE dreary November afternoon passed, and the shadows lengthened and deepened the gloom that hung over Greatlarch. The avenue trees waved their long branches as a soughing wind swept through them. The pines sang and whistled, and the dense tangle down behind the mausoleum was black and eerie, more than ever justifying its name of Spooky Hollow. Mrs. Mellish stood staring out of a rear window, almost certain she could hear faint strains of the wild harp.

"Come away, now, Susan," commanded her spouse. "It's no spook music you'll hear, savin' that which you make in your own ears——"

"Hush your blather, Mellish. I want no coddlin' from you." And then, with true feminine consistency, she turned to her husband and threw herself into his arms, sobbing convulsively.

"Therey, therey, now, Soodie, cry all you want to; it'll do you good," and he patted her shoulder and smoothed her hair and comforted her by his strong, protecting arms.

"It's Miss Rosemary," Susan said, wiping her eyes. "I can't stand it to see the child so gonelike. She wanders about, her eyes wide and staring, and that full of sadness!"

"She loved her Antan—that she did." Mellish nodded his gray head as he spoke. "There's terrible moil, Susan.

Who killed Miss Anne? Answer me that, now!"

"No mortal hand," and Mrs. Mellish gazed solemnly into space. "Never could a human hand do it, you see, for the door was locked and the poor lady in there alone. Comes the ghost of the other lady who met her death in that very room, and—the wicked, evil thing—she killed our Miss Anne! Or where's the knife? How could a human, mortal villain kill her and leave no weepon. Or how get out through a locked door? Answer me that, Mellish, now!"

"No, I can't. Yet 'twas no spook, of that I'm certain!"

Susan Mellish held up her finger, listening.

"Hark to the organ, now," she said. "Master's fair crazy with his grief!"

The great organ pealed and rolled its melodies through the house. Fugues and dirges of the greatest masters were played with a strong, sure touch and a powerful, agonizing sorrow, like the cry of a lost soul. One funeral march after another sounded as Homer Vincent strove to quiet his perturbed spirit by the aid of his one great passion, music.

Rosemary stood in the atrium, looking through the plate-glass doors down across the terrace, across the lagoon, to the white mausoleum and to the black Spooky Hollow beyond it. She had put on a black dress of plain and simple cut, and her white arms shone in the dusk as she leaned them against the window and hid her face upon them.

"If he doesn't stop that music," she thought, "I shall go crazy! I never heard him play so like one inspired! It is heart-rending, crucifying, yet it has a triumphant note, like the triumph of death. Poor Uncle Homer, he must be almost beside himself with grief! I know by the way he plays. And he has no other solace. I wish he would let me talk to him. I'd like to talk about Antan, but he doesn't want me to mention her name."

And then, through the long, shadowy room, lighted only by a faint radiance from the entrance hall, came softly a footfall, and Rosemary turned to see Lulie Eaton, her friend whom she had visited the night before.

"Rosemary," and Lulie put her arms round her, "I want you to go home with me and stay a few days, at least until the funeral. Won't you? It will be so much better for you, and—your uncle won't mind, will he?"

"I don't know." Rosemary hesitated. "It's good of you, Lulie. I'd be glad to go, if I ought to——"

"Of course you ought to. You owe it to yourself to get out of this atmosphere. Oh, have they found out anything—about——"

"About Antan? No, not a thing. The detectives are at their wits' end. Uncle Homer is nearly distracted—listen to that awful music."

"It is desperately sad. But what a wonderful performer he is!"

"Oh, yes. Now he is improvising. That means he's a little easier in his mind. Let's ask him if I may go."

The two girls went to the organ room, the high walls and domed ceiling giving back the music and making the place seem more than ever like a church. With a feeling of awe, almost of fear, they tiptoed toward the silent figure on the organ bench. The light was low, the branches of the tall trees waved against the windows with weird sounds. Seeing the girls, Vincent paused, slowly trailing his softly touched chords off to nothingness.

"What is it, Rosemary?" he said, wearily pushing back the thick hair from his brow. "How do you do, Miss Eaton?"

Lulie Eaton dared her request.

"Oh, Mr. Vincent," she said, "I've come to take Rosemary home with me for a few days. Mayn't she go?"

"If she chooses." Homer Vincent spoke coldly, and again his hands hovered above the keys.

"Oh, uncle," Rosemary cried, "I won't go if you don't want me to. Indeed, I won't."

"Would you like to be left alone in this house, Rosemary?" Vincent asked as, barely touching the keys, he made them sound like a faint echo of a sweet, sad strain.

"No!" and the girl shuddered at the thought.

"Yet you would leave me——"

"But I didn't know you cared to have me here, uncle. You don't like to have me mention Antan. You don't even talk to me!"

"My dear, there is some grief too deep for words, yet human companionship is a help and a comfort, even though ordinary conversation is out of the question. And you can help by looking after the house. Can you not fill Antan's place to a degree? Can you not order the meals and give out supplies—or whatever your aunt did?"

Rosemary smiled a little at his idea or her aunt's duties. For, she thought, Miss Vincent did none of these things; the two Mellishes arranged all such details. But Vincent was not the sort of man who knew what was going on in the domestic department.

However, Rosemary sensed the fact that her uncle wanted her to stay by him, if only as a moral support, and, though she would have preferred to go with Lulie, yet she felt a certain pride in the idea that he wanted her at home.

Not exactly afraid of her uncle, Rosemary never could quite conquer a feeling of awe of him and a dread of running counter to his will in any way. But she had long ago learned that, if conditions were right, if there were no flaw in the arrangements that made for his creature comfort, she need never look for any but the kindest and most courteous treatment from him. But, if any of his orders were not fulfilled accurately, if any meal were a moment late, any course imperfectly cooked or served, any book or smoking-stand moved one iota from its accustomed place, then, as Rosemary had often had occasion to notice, his sister or his niece received, however undeserved, a portion of his reprimand.

So Rosemary declined to go with her friend, and after a short visit Lulie went off alone.

"What were you two girls talking about?" Vincent asked as he left the organ and joined Rosemary in the living room.

The lights were on now, and the beautiful room was warm and cheerful.

But the girl seemed struck dumb. She blushed and remained silent, raising her troubled eyes to her uncle's face, only to lower them again in confusion.

"I can read your thoughts the same as if you had spoken, my dear," her uncle said, a tinge of displeasure in his tone. "You talked of young Collins. Has he been here to see you?"

"No, uncle, not since you forbade it."

Rosemary's tone was gentle, her voice steady, but in her golden brown eyes there shone a sudden light that was rebellious, almost mutinous.

Vincent caught this gleam and said in real irritation: "I do think, Rosemary, at this time, when I am in such deep grief, you might be less selfishly inclined to brood sullenly over your own petty grievances. You know my dislike for Bryce Collins, you know I will not hear of your marrying him; why not, then, give over thinking about it?"

"Did you ever love anybody, uncle?" she asked quietly, mentally adding: "except yourself?"

Vincent gave her a curious glance and then said sadly, "I loved your Aunt Anne. She was my dear sister, and, now that she has been so terribly taken away from me—away from us—I should think, Rosemary, that you would

turn your thoughts to your great loss, even if you have no sympathy or sorrow for mine."

"Oh, uncle, don't talk to me like that! I do feel sorry for you, I do grieve for Antan. I can't realize she's gone! What shall I do without her?"

"A very grave question, my child. But now we must make some necessary arrangements for the funeral. My sister must be buried with the dignity and beauty befitting her life. And you must help, for there are many details to be looked after."

"Yes, uncle; anything I can do to help or to lessen your load of care and responsibility I am glad to undertake."

"That's the way to talk, my dear child. Listen, and I'll tell you what you can do."

And, when the talk was over, Rosemary found herself weighted down with her share of the errands and arrangements necessary for the obsequies that Homer Vincent deemed appropriate for his sister. Not that he desired any ostentation or display, but his directions as to the music, the flowers, the clergyman's address, the luncheon to be prepared for guests from a distance, and the thousand and one things that he mentioned, seemed to Rosemary to make a task burdensome and difficult. However, she relied on the Mellishes for much help, and she was so glad to be of some real assistance to her uncle that she willingly promised all he asked.

They drifted into a discussion of the terrible circumstances, as mysterious this minute as they had been early in the morning when the discovery had been made.

"Uncle," Rosemary cried, "who killed Antan? And how? I must know those two things or I shall go out of my mind! I can't conceive of any possible explanation, can you?"

"No, Rosemary, I can't. It is as great a mystery as it is a tragedy, and I can't say more than that."

"No, uncle, we can't say more than that. But somebody killed her—that we know. How, then, did he get out of the room, and what did he do with the knife?"

"Those, Rosemary, are the unanswerable questions. And I must say I don't believe these dunderheaded detectives who are on the job can ever solve the mystery. Do you?"

"Oh, I don't know anything about such things, uncle, dear. But they do seem unable to discover anything or to suggest anything. Tell me more about that Johnson man, uncle. Was he a—a gentleman?"

"Why, no, Rosemary, not as we look upon a gentleman. Yet he had decent manners and presentable appearance. I wish I had never seen him!"

"Do you think he killed Antan?"

"How can I say I think so, when I can't imagine his motive for such a deed? Unless, of course, he stole her ruby. Too bad, dear—that gem was to have been yours."

"Yes, I know. But, uncle, when a strange man comes here and acts in such an extraordinary manner, not going to bed at all, and then mysteriously disappears, and we find Antan dead—isn't there logical reason to think maybe he did it?"

"There certainly is, Rosemary, and I shall never rest till we find that man! It must be possible to find him. He can't have dropped out of existence. But that's where I thought the detectives would do better work. I supposed they would get on his trail somehow, almost immediately. I thought detectives could always trace a fugitive, always find a skulking, hiding villain. But they seem not to know which way to turn!"

"Yes, I noticed that. And that Mr. Lane knows even less, I should say."

"Yes, he's a numbskull. But the little detective, that one called Brown, seems rather alert and wide awake, yet he

can't get anywhere, apparently. Unless they do something soon, I shall call in a more expert detective."

"Can you do that? Right over their heads, I mean?"

"I most certainly shall. My sister's death must be avenged if any effort of mine can accomplish it. But I do admit it seems a problem impossible of solution."

"The facts are so irreconcilable," the girl said musingly. "I can't see any conceivable way the deed could have been done and the room left locked and the weapon missing."

"Rosemary, there's only one explanation. But I am not yet quite able to believe in it." Vincent's voice was low, and his direct gaze was so piercing that the girl was startled. She felt an uncanny, a sinister, presentiment of his meaning.

"Oh, Uncle Homer," she cried, "you don't mean—you can't mean Mrs. Lamont——" She looked over her shoulder and out the window toward the temple where once had rested the mortal remains of that other victim.

"I've always been a practical, hard-headed unbeliever in spiritualism," Vincent said slowly, "but I am so staggered by this thing, so puzzled to think of any possible explanation, however improbable, that, as I say, I see no other way to look but toward the supernatural. Yet I will not as yet put myself on record as going over to the spiritualistic belief; only, unless we can unearth some evidence, find some clews, I cannot say what I may do."

"Uncle Homer," and Rosemary's face looked wondering, "I heard the harp last night."

"You imagined it, dear. How could you hear what doesn't exist?"

"But I did. I'm sure of it. It was between two and three o'clock. I was wakeful, and I was tempted to get up and go to some south window. But I didn't, and yet, even in my own room, which is north, I heard faintly the low, wailing strains of the wild harp. Have you never heard it, uncle?"

"I have sometimes thought I did, child, but I put it down to imagination. Leave me now, Rosemary. I am very weary, and I must think over some matters by myself."

So Rosemary went in search of the two Mellishes, and they discussed the arrangements for the funeral services of Anne Vincent. To Rosemary's own surprise, but not to Mrs. Mellish's, it soon transpired that the girl was not at all wise or experienced in household matters. Anne Vincent had been the guiding spirit, the directing hand, of the establishment, and, though she had occasionally called on her niece for some slight assistance, it was always mere routine work and carefully under the elder woman's own supervision. So, when the cook began to ask about how many chickens and hams should be prepared for the cold luncheon, and what sweets should be provided, Rosemary found herself quite at sea and told Mrs. Mellish and her husband to get whatever they deemed best.

"That's all very well," and Melly shook her head; "all very well, Miss Rosemary, but your uncle won't like it a bit if you don't fill your aunt's place. Many's the little thing she did for him, many's the time she looked out for him and stood between him and some bit of a bother. Be careful now, Miss Rosemary, to do such things yourself. Keep a constant watch on your uncle. See that everything is ready to his hand when he reaches out his hand to get it—meaning, of course, such as is outside the duties of me and Mellish."

"I don't know what you mean, Melly. What am I to do? Darn his socks—that sort of thing?"

"That, of course, miss—and his buttons and all. But hand him a paper or a book that he's glancing about for—offer to play Russian bank with him,

when he's in just the mood for it—gather from his symptoms what sort of food he'll want for dinner—that's the way Miss Anne looked after him."

"Good gracious, Melly, I can't do those things! Why, I don't know how to play that stupid old card game! And I didn't know he had symptoms!"

"You must learn, then, Miss Rosemary." Mellish himself spoke now, and very seriously. "Your uncle is a good man and a kind man if he is comfortable. If not—oh, well, miss, you know him!"

"Of course I do. And I know you two look out for all his real wants. I'll do anything I can, of course, but I guess he'll have to diagnose his own symptoms and select his special foods himself. As to this luncheon, Melly, order whatever you think best. Be sure to have enough, that's all, for relatives and friends will come from all over the country. And, Melly, I don't know much about ordering and such things. Antan never let me help her much or tried to teach me anything about housekeeping."

"You should know, Miss Rosemary. It's right that every young lady should be a housekeeper, such as your aunt, rest her soul, was. Now, if you'll let me, I'll teach you, and you'll soon learn, for you've a quick wit and handy fingers."

"All right, Melly, and we'll begin after all this trouble has cleared up a little. Melly, who killed Antan?"

"The ghost lady, Miss Rosemary. Didn't I hear her playin' on her wild harp——"

"Why, so did I, Melly. What time did you hear it?"

"As it might be, say, two or three o'clock of the mornin', miss."

"That's the very time I heard it! Melly, how could a ghost kill anybody with a dagger?"

"Likewise, Miss Rosemary, how could a human kill anybody with a dagger and go away, leaving the door locked behind him?"

Mellish, who had mysteriously disappeared, returned and whispered to the girl.

"I opine, Miss Rosemary," he said softly, "if you was to step out this little back door now—just step out, you know—you might—well, just step out now. I opine you won't be sorry."

Having more than a suspicion of what Mellish was opining about, Rosemary stepped out of the small door that gave on an areaway. As she had hoped, there stood the tall, thin form of Bryce Collins.

"Oh," she whispered, "you ought not to have come. How did you dare?"

"I felt I must see you, Rosemary; it's too utterly absurd to be forbidden the house, for no reason at all."

"I know it, Bryce; but Uncle Homer is terribly upset, anyway, and if he sees you——"

"He won't see me. I just want a few minutes with you, dear. Can't we go inside somewhere?"

"No, I don't dare. Melly has just been telling me I must look after Uncle Homer as Antan used to. And surely I can't allow anything that he has so positively forbidden. He'd—oh, I don't know what he'd do!"

"What would he do, dear? Fly in a passion?"

"No, I've never seen him do that. But he'd be so displeased! He'd reprove me so——"

"Rosemary, it's idiotic for a girl twenty-one years old to be afraid of anybody like that! Your uncle is not your father, and even if he were——"

"Don't talk like that, Bryce. He's the same as a father to me. Ever since my own dear father died five years ago Uncle Homer has done all for me that a father could do, and more than a great many fathers do. I've seen the other girls; their fathers aren't half so good to them as uncle is to me. And

now Antan is gone I owe it to him to be obedient and to observe all his commands."

"Don't you love me, dear?"

Bryce Collins was a tall, slender man, but his physique showed strength, and his bearing was that of an assured, determined nature. His deep-blue eyes were honest and straightforward, and his smooth-shaven face showed a chin that betokened will power to the point of stubbornness. And Collins was stubborn. He clung to an opinion or a determination like a puppy to a root, and he never gave up. Now, at twenty-six, he was an insistent suitor of Rosemary Vincent, but his plea was denied by her uncle.

Homer Vincent gave no reason for his decision—it was not his habit to give reasons—but he declared it was final. To Rosemary he said she was too young to think of marriage yet, and he preferred that she should never marry. He hinted that he and his sister Anne had been much happier in their lives than their brother, Rosemary's father, who had married young. In any case, he told the girl she must give up all thought of Bryce Collins, and, unable to do otherwise, Rosemary had submitted to his decree.

And, as the girl was by no means of a sly or deceitful nature, she obeyed the spirit of her uncle's dictum as well as the latter. That is, she did so far as she could; but Collins, with his indomitable will and his firm determination, would not let her give him up finally, unless she would tell him she did not care for him. This Rosemary could not do, for she loved Bryce and hoped against hope that some day her uncle would relent.

Now, in view of the tragedy that hung over the house, Rosemary was more than ever afraid to have Collins' presence known, and yet, never before had she felt so strong a wish, greater need for his presence. And his gentle tone, his whispered question, seemed to take away all her power of resistance.

"Yes," she said, "I love you," and eagerly he clasped her in his waiting arms.

"Bless her heart! Whatever is coming to her?" and, wiping her eyes, Melly turned from the window, where she had been watching the pair.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE HOLLOW.

TWENTY-FOUR hours had elapsed since the funeral of Anne Vincent, and the mystery of her death was no nearer solution than it had been the moment her body was found. None of the relatives or friends who had attended the simple but beautiful services had been asked to tarry at the house. Homer Vincent had no desire to have them do so, and, though several had dropped hints betokening their wish to stay on for a visit, they had met with no responsive invitation and had reluctantly taken their departure.

He sent for Brewster and Brown and asked for their report.

"I have to confess, Mr. Vincent," Brewster said, "that we are up against it. We are convinced that the strange visitor, Mr. Johnson, is responsible for the death of your sister, but we can form no theory that will fit the facts. We have examined the bedroom, and we find there is absolutely no means of entrance or exit save that one door. The windows have patent ventilators that admit air without leaving possible space for an intruder. The lock of the door is burst in such a fashion as to show clearly that it was locked on the inside and could only be opened by force. We have tried every possible suggestion of suicide, and we find that theory untenable, because there is no weapon in evidence. Miss Vincent could not have killed herself and then disposed of the dagger, for the death

blow was instantly fatal; we have the doctor's assurance for that."

"I am very sure," Homer Vincent said, "that my sister did not kill herself. She had no motive for such a deed. I left her that evening in the best of spirits, and she was looking forward to the matter we were to confer about the next day. And, as you say, it could not have been suicide, as there has been no weapon found. I assume you made a thorough search of the bedding——"

"Oh, yes, I attended to that myself. No, suicide is out of the question."

"I suppose"—Vincent spoke a little diffidently—"you hard-headed detectives wouldn't consider the—er—the supernatural for a moment."

"No, sir!" declared Brown. "Not for a moment! I've been a detective too many years to suspect a spook as long as there are human beings upon this earth. Miss Vincent was murdered by a knife held in a hand of flesh and blood! The motive was robbery—robbery of her valuable ruby. The criminal is, of course, the man named Johnson, the ruby manufacturer. I can reconstruct the crime as it must have been, but I confess I can't see how it could have been so!"

"What do you mean by 'reconstruct the crime?'" Vincent asked curiously.

"Why, I mean, that evening, after you left Mr. Johnson in his room, he came out of it, later—probably walked round the house a bit, reconnoitering—and laid his plans to murder Miss Vincent as soon as the first faint light of dawn gave him opportunity. He did this and then slipped out of the house while the watchman was at his breakfast and the other servants about their work."

"Logical enough," Vincent said, "except for the seemingly impossible feat of getting in and out of that locked room."

"There you have it, Mr. Vincent!" Brewster exclaimed. "That's right—seemingly impossible feat. It wasn't impossible, because he did it. He had to do it. There's no other explanation. The thing is to find out how he did it, and the only way to do that is to catch him and ask him. Nobody knows but himself, so he must do the explaining."

"That sounds plausible, Mr. Brewster. Now can you find him? He has four days' start. May he not be far away by this time—perhaps out at sea?"

"That's true, Mr. Vincent, but all we can do is to hunt him down. Perhaps he can be found even if he is on an ocean steamer. Indeed, that would be one of the easiest hiding places to track down. But, and this is not an easy thing to say, we can't do it. Mr. Brown and I have done all we could so far, but, for a big hunt like this must be, we require the machinery, the facilities, of a larger police department, of more experienced investigators."

"I daresay." Vincent nodded in agreement. "In fact, I had thought of proposing the plan of putting the matter up to some one else. Whom do you suggest?"

"The Burlington Police. Not only have they a well-equipped detective bureau, but they have one man in especial whose forte seems to be delving into mysteries that defy solution by others. His name is Prentiss, but so keen is he, so sharp-sighted, he is called 'The Burlington Hawk Eye.'"

Homer Vincent gave an involuntary smile. "Why, that is a celebrated paper of quite another Burlington!"

"Yes, it's only a nickname. Well, what do you say, sir? Shall we call him in?"

"By all means. As I told you, I wish to spare no effort, no expense, in my endeavor to avenge my sister's death. I suppose this man will come in the interests of the police, but if it is any better or more advisable to engage him personally I will do so."

"We'll see about that, sir. If he succeeds, you can, of course, give him an honorarium. He is a wizard—I'll say that for him, but I can't see him solving this case. It's too strange!"

However, when Prentiss arrived, he gave the impression that he certainly could solve that case or any other. Not that the man was bumptious or unduly conceited, but he had an air of self-reliance, of self-assuredness, that carried weight by its mere physical effect.

Homer Vincent regarded him with curiosity that turned to respect and then to entire satisfaction. He had a long talk with him, and Prentiss earnestly declared his ability to find the murderer.

"There's a mystery," he said; "I am here to solve it. There's a seeming impossibility; I am here to explain it. There's a missing man; I am here to find him."

If Vincent thought the man too sure of himself or his powers, he did not say so and merely nodded approval of such determination.

The Burlington Hawk Eye was not an impressive-looking man; in fact, he was rather inconspicuous. Of medium height, average figure, unimportant coloring, he was saved from absolute nonentity of appearance by his piercing, darting eyes. These eyes were of the color sometimes called beryl or topaz. Also, they were a trifle prominent, and were so quick of motion, so glinting of shine, that they made remarkable an otherwise negligible face.

He shot a glance of inquiry at Vincent, as if to ask his recognition of his powers. But Homer Vincent was not accustomed to bestow praise.

"I am glad to learn of your enthusiasm," he conceded, "and I am ready and willing to do anything at all I can to help you. But I must ask that you will not disturb me unnecessarily. While I am most anxious to have the mystery of my sister's death solved, most eager to find that man Johnson, yet I am not at all interested in the details of the search, nor do I want uncertain or partial reports. When you have learned beyond doubt some important fact, acquaint me with it, but do not come to me with trifling discoveries that may or may not mean anything. Am I clear?"

"Yes, Mr. Vincent, perfectly so. I understand. In fact, I have been told you are a recluse and wish no unnecessary communications with your fellow men."

"That is perhaps an exaggerated way to put it," Vincent observed calmly, "yet for your own edification it is perhaps the best way. Yes, you may look upon me in that light, Mr. Prentiss. However, that does not mean that I do not want to be told of anything you may discover of real importance. And if you are uncertain as to the value of your news, refer it to Mellish, my butler. He is entirely in my confidence and often stands between me and what you have termed my fellow men."

If Prentiss had expected to jar the calm of Homer Vincent by his outspokenness, he must have been disappointed, for Vincent seemed rather pleased than otherwise at the implication of retirement.

Sensing this, the detective resolved to get all the information possible at this time, for it might prove difficult to get future interviews.

"Will you describe Johnson, please?" he asked.

"He is a very dark man, both as to hair and skin. He is as good-looking as the average citizen, and has an air of business alertness and executive ability."

"What is his business?"

"Aside from this plan of manufacturing synthetic rubies, I know of none. It is probable he has some other calling, for he appeared a well-dressed, well-set-up man, as if accustomed to a com-

petency but not wealth. He put his business proposition to my sister and myself with a straightforward manner and a fair and equal arrangement of profits."

"You were to finance the thing?"

"Yes; and my sister wished also to take a share in it. She had a fortune equal to my own and was anxious to invest in this new scheme."

"What disposition did your sister make of her fortune?"

"She left no will. Neither she nor I have ever made one. We agreed that, as whichever of us died first would legally inherit the estate of the other, a will was unnecessary for either of us."

"And Miss Rosemary Vincent?"

"The question of her inheritance has not yet been brought up. It is true that my sister intended our niece should have her great ruby—but, alas, that gem is missing. It may be, however, that if you find Johnson you can recover the ruby. In that case, it will, of course, belong to my niece. As to my niece's fortune or prospects, we need not take up that subject at this time. Sufficient to say that she is under my care, and I shall guard and protect her interests. Now, Mr. Prentiss, I will ask you to excuse me from further conversation. Mellish will show you the room Mr. Johnson occupied. It is still untouched, I think. He will also show you my sister's room and the rest of the house and grounds. Or he will depute some one to do so. You may command him in any way you choose."

"Thank you, Mr. Vincent. I can't help hoping for success in this investigation. It is conceded among our profession that, the more strange and bizarre conditions appear, the more impossible the correlation of facts seems to be, the easier of solution a mystery is. This may or may not be literally true, but at any rate it is true in part."

"You most certainly have contradictory conditions in this case; you surely have strange and bizarre situations. Go to it, then, Mr. Prentiss, and advise me when you have achieved some definite success."

But The Burlington Hawk Eye was not so easily shaken off.

"One more thing, Mr. Vincent," he said. "What about this wild harp? Have you ever heard it?"

"I should be sorry to put myself on record as a believer in the supernatural" —Vincent looked as if the matter were distasteful to him—"but I will say this much. If there are occult forces, if there are deeds done without the intervention of human agency, then, Mr. Prentiss, I must say this looks like such a case. But, mind you, I do not say that there are. I do not state that I believe my sister met her death by supernatural means, but I own I cannot explain the circumstances by any natural procedure. Also, I think you ought to know that the place is reputed haunted, and that the room my sister occupied was the room of a previous mistress of the house, who was also found dead in her bed there. It is said that her spirit has haunted this place ever since her death, but of these tales I am no sponsor; I merely mention them because I think you ought to hear of them from me rather than from the silly townspeople. They have dubbed the place 'Spooky Hollow,' and they claim to have seen ghostly figures and to have heard ghostly voices."

"This brings us back to the wild harp. Have you ever heard it?"

Homer Vincent hesitated. Then he said: "Mr. Prentiss, I am no authority on the subject. The truth is, music is my passion. Not only do I play on my organ frequently, but when I am not playing I seem to hear the strains of my favorite compositions. They ring in my ears to such an extent that I am as conscious of them as when I am actually hearing them. And so, if I say that I have heard, or think I have heard,

this so-called wild harp, you must remember that I am also willing to admit that it may easily be only my memories of music I have played, or that it is some of the harmony with which my brain is always teeming."

"I see. And yet you are willing to say that at times you have thought or imagined that you heard the harp music?"

"Yes, I am willing to say that. But I insist that you do not lay too much stress upon it in your deductions. For I object to being set down as a spiritualist when I am far from certain that I really do believe at all in such things."

"I see. And one thing more, Mr. Vincent. Will you describe to me this woodland down back of the temple, the part of your estate that they definitely call Spooky Hollow? What is it like?"

"It is a densely wooded area full of low, tangled underbrush and containing, also, tall pines, larches, and spruces. There are, too, some white birches, which, I make no doubt, are the shapes the frightened townsfolk have diagnosed as spooks."

"Doubtless, that is true. And the ground—is it wet—swampy?"

"A little marshy, I believe. I've never been down in it, but I think it is wet, and I purpose having it drained and reclaimed."

"Is it damp enough, marshy enough, to have bogs or quagmires? I'm wondering, you see, if Johnson could have wandered down there and could have gone into the swamp and have been sucked in by the quaking bog."

Vincent looked up in surprise.

"Oh, I don't think the swamp is as bad as that. It's hardly of the quicksand variety, if that is what you mean. But ask Mellish about it; he will know the details of it far better than I do. And I scarcely think Johnson would have gone out of doors—I mean to walk about. He was entranced with my house and wished to examine its architecture and marbles, but I can't think he went outside until, his fell aim accomplished, he went out to run away."

"He left coat and hat behind him."

"Yes, that is one of the strange features of the case."

"Had he an umbrella?"

Vincent pondered. "I really don't know. If so, doubtless Mellish took it from him and cared for it. Can you gather nothing from his hat or coat? I thought such things carried meanings for detectives."

"Possibly. I haven't examined them yet. Now, Mr. Vincent, you don't know of any other possible reason for Mr. Johnson to kill your sister except robbery? Could he have been an old-time suitor of hers? Or a crank, an anarchist, or even a homicidal maniac? Did his conversation hint any such thing?"

"I never thought of such explanations," and Vincent looked bewildered. "No, of course he was not an old beau. Ridiculous! My sister never saw him before; of that I am positive. Nor did he seem like an anarchist or a homicide. He was normal in manner and conversation. I object to talking of business affairs at the dinner table; I do not think it good for digestion. But our conversation was on usual, ordinary subjects. Mr. Johnson did not seem an educated man in a cultural sense, but he seemed a thorough man of the world, of fairly wide experiences and good judgment."

"He said nothing of his life or affairs outside the ruby business?"

"No; our talk was impersonal. He knew little of music, and I know of no subject that specially interested him. I'm sorry, Mr. Prentiss, but I can tell you nothing definite concerning his personality. If I could, I should have told it long ago."

"Of course, of course. Well, Mr. Vincent, I will go about my work. By

the way, you have confidence in all your servants?"

"Absolute confidence in Mellish, my butler, and his wife, who is my cook. Also in Francine, the little French girl who was maid to my sister, and who also attends on my niece. She may seem like a shallow-pated little thing, but she was devoted to Miss Vincent and truly mourns for her."

"Yes, yes, I will talk with her. Good morning, Mr. Vincent."

"Ah, one moment, Mr. Prentiss. I shall not ask you to make your home at Greatlarch while you are conducting your investigations. It would not please me to know of your continued presence here. But pray feel free to come and go as you like, and refer all questions to Mellish."

Assenting to this, The Burlington Hawk Eye took his leave of the master of the house and went in search of the servants.

"Umbrella sir? Yes, sir," said Mellish in response to the inquiry of Prentiss. "Mr. Johnson did carry an umbrella, and I did take it from him that day; and never again did it occur to my memory! I put it, of course, in the coat room, in the umbrella cupboard, and there, I make me no doubt, it still is. I'll see, sir."

In a moment, Mellish returned, bringing triumphantly a good-looking and carefully rolled umbrella.

Prentiss looked at it with interest.

"You can learn a lot from an umbrella," he said. "First, I deduce a careful, tidy sort of person, accustomed to take good care of his belongings. A knob handle, not a crook, denotes a fastidious or particular person. Nine out of ten umbrellas have crook handles."

"Do they now, sir?" asked Mellish, much interested.

"Of good quality silk," Prentiss went on, "black, fairly new, made by——" He opened it and read the name of a well-known New York haberdasher.

"H'm, we ought to trace it through that firm——"

"Trace an umbrella, sir, as any one might buy——"

"Ah, but you see our man had this marked. See, 'H. J.,' the initials interwined. Now if we can trace up that order——"

"You'll find out that Henry Johnson had his umbrella marked there, but how will that tell you where to look for him now?"

"Every bit of information we can get is important when hunting a missing man. Put it away, Mellish—or suppose we take it up to the room Johnson had when he was here. Yes, that will be best."

The two went up to the south room Johnson had occupied. But, as he had only tidied up for dinner, not having evening clothes with him, there was little to notice and but few things disturbed at all.

Prentiss went over the scanty array of clothing in the bag.

"Come now, Mellish, you're by way of being a valet. Wouldn't your master take more than that when going on a journey?"

"That he would, sir. Mr. Vincent's overnight bag holds as much as a small trunk."

"Just so. And I deduce our friend here didn't expect to stay the night."

"Maybe so, sir. Maybe he thought he could do up the business in a short time."

"Yes; strange he left no papers, no letters or memoranda of any kind."

"Mr. Vincent has all the papers about the ruby-construction business, sir. Mr. Johnson left all those with Mr. Vincent that night."

"Yes, but I mean other papers. You've not cleared out any, Mellish?"

"Oh, no, sir. Not a thing in this room has been disturbed. Orders, sir."

"And that turned-down bed is just as the housemaid left it?"

"Exactly, sir. But she'd be for tidying up his brushes and that, at the same time. So as one of the brushes is out of line, and there's a towel or so rumpled up in the bathroom, I take it the man was in his room after the confab with Mr. Vincent in the evening."

"Oh, yes; and, beside, Mr. Vincent brought him up to his room, you know, and said good night to him."

"Did he, now? That's a deal for the master to do for any guest!"

"Mr. Vincent's not given to putting himself out for anybody?"

"That he is not. Mr. Vincent prefers that people put themselves out for him."

"But a good master, eh?"

"Never a better—given that things go right."

"The place will go on just the same, now that the lady is not here?"

"Oh, yes; leastways, I suppose so. My wife, now, she can run the house as Mr. Vincent wants it, and I doubt not Miss Rosemary will help look after things."

"Miss Rosemary? She's a niece?"

"Yes, sir; her father, Mr. Vincent's brother, died five years since, and Miss Rosemary then came here to live."

"She has money of her own?"

"I take it she has, sir. She never lacks for anything she wants. But money is not talked of in this house. They are no purse-proud upstarts. Mr. Vincent wants only what's comfortable and to his wishes, naught for show or ostentationary purposes."

"That's fine. And Miss Anne was the same?"

"The very same, sir. Though whatever Mr. Vincent was, of course Miss Anne would be. And Miss Rosemary, too."

"Yes. And now, Mellish, what about the wild harp?"

A slight smile hovered on the man's features.

"Well, sir, I'd not say as there is any truth in them stories. They are what you might call imaginatious; yes, sir, merely imaginations."

"But some people have heard the weird strains."

"They think they have sir; but, well, you know yourself it couldn't be. How could a harp be for making music when there's no harp there and no hand to pull its strings?"

"But a phantom harp, and a phantom hand to touch the strings——"

"Nay, nay, sir. Nothing of the sort. All old woman's tales. All made-up yarns—that's what they are."

"And all made up about the visitations of Mrs. Lamont's spirit?"

"Of course, sir. Take it truly, sir, you waste your time a-looking for the spooks of Spooky Hollow."

"Then, Mellish, then who killed Miss Anne?"

"It was that Johnson, sir. Yes, sir, he's the villain, the criminal, the anathema maharajah!"

And Mellish's solemn face and tense, strained voice kept Prentiss from laughing at his queer, mistaken words.

To be continued in next week's issue of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE.

CONVICT MAKES DARING LEAP FROM TRAIN

WHILE en route from Sedalia, Missouri, to the penitentiary, where he was sentenced to serve five years for shooting his wife, Roy Kuehling, of Washington, D. C., made a daring leap from the train as it neared Pilot Grove. Although handcuffed, he succeeded in making his escape. Sheriff Z. R. Church, in whose custody Kuehling was making the journey, is said to have been asleep.

Absolutely Cut Off

by

Kenneth Duane Whipple

Author of "From Another Angle," "On the River Road," etc.

SUCCESSFUL lawbreaking, itself a highly specialized profession, has little use in any of its branches for a single-track mind unreceptive to new ideas. No crook can afford to be behind the times unless he can afford also to be behind the bars.

But Barney Broadhurst, outlining his plans for the looting of Wilmarth's two banks, did not feel that he was behind the times. To his mind, the scheme which he was now laying before "Stick" Freeman and Danny Wark, summoned to his rooms in the Avalon, combined modern methods of theft on a large scale with absolute safety from the consequences.

Stick and Danny lounged in leather chairs by the windows. Barney, walking to and fro before them, paused to light a cigarette. The match flame struck a sparkle from his diamond-ringed fingers.

"Now this town," he resumed, emphasizing his words with short, choppy gestures of his pudgy hands, "is a cinch. It was just made for a job like this. All we gotta do is to work things out right. I got onto this little burg week before last, when I come down from Montreal with a load of hootch—for myself, see? When it comes to buyin' booze, I don't trust nobody—not even you, Stick. You'd gyp me with wood alcohol as soon as the next guy."

"Aw, can it!" growled Stick. "What's that got to do with this rube town?"

"Not a thing," said Barney smoothly. "Not a thing. I was just tellin' you, see? Now about that town—well, it's like this. I stopped at the upper end o' Main Street to get some gas that afternoon. And while I'm sittin' there, I see these two banks, square across the road from each other, and not more'n a hundred feet from the upper bridge. That give me a hunch—just like that, see?

"So I played it clear across the boards. I hunted up a hotel—there ain't but two or three, or maybe four—and stayed over that night to give the place the up-and-down. And take it from me, boys, the whole thing fits together like clockwork—absolutely like clockwork! There ain't another burg in the whole United States that you can cut off—absolutely cut off—for an hour or more while you make your get-away!"

He paused impressively and drew out a blue-bordered silk handkerchief to pass across his broad, pink brow damp with little beads of moisture from the hot sun outside.

"How do you figure it?" queried Stick Freeman, his beady black eyes gleaming incredulously. "I've never yet seen one of your soft snaps without a catch in it somewhere, Barney. Trot out the dope and give us a slant at it. And for the love o' Mike quit hikin' back and forth there! Sit down and take your time."

"All right."

Barney dropped back into a chair. The next moment, however, he was leaning eagerly forward across the table.

"Now get this," he went on. "I dug it all up myself, and it's straight dope. This burg—Wilmarth's the name of it—is up in the mountains, eighteen or twenty miles from the Canadian line, see? It's right in the valley. There's long mountains each side of it, with the river runnin' right between 'em.

"There's only one main road. It runs north and south along the river. It's a swell road, too. We could be over the line in half an hour. And after that it's not far to Montreal.

"Now there's farms all up and down the valley, and south o' Wilmarth, on the main road, is a bunch of towns. But the nearest one is five miles. There's an old loggin' road over the mountain to the east, but it's so rotten not even a team can get over it except in winter, when there's enough snow on the ground to cover up the stumps. There's only one phone line and only one telegraph line. They both run along the river. It's a cinch to cut 'em each side o' town—and that's that."

Danny Wark, though apparently abstracted in the view from the window, had been listening no less closely than Stick. Now, as Barney paused beside the table, he shook his red head decidedly.

"Ye've told us nawthin' yet," he demurred. "I can take ye to a dozen towns where the pickin's as good as this is like to be. I'll have nawthin' to do with any free-for-all auto race all the way across New England and Canada. It may be all right if ye win—but it's the devil if ye lose."

Barney shook his head impatiently.

"No race to it," he said. "It's a walk-away?"

"But the roads——"

"Shut up, will you, Danny, and let me do the talkin'? I ain't finished yet."

Danny muttered under his breath and looked out of the window again. Barney, ignoring him, turned his attention to Stick.

"Now, Wilmarth is on the east bank of the river. Get that in your head, Stick—the east bank. But the road, all the way up between the mountains, runs on the west bank. And why? Because there ain't any room on the other side. The mountain comes right down to the river. There ain't even a trail.

"But just opposite Wilmarth the river makes a big bend. And all the flat meadow that's been on the west side, shifts over onto the east side for about a mile. And Wilmarth's right in that bend—on the east side. Get me?

"Now, there's only two bridges across, one at each end o' the town, see? They're regular old rattletraps, wooden ones—sort of combination highway and railroad bridge. And that's all there is—there isn't any more. Now knock your bridges out, and how're you goin' to get out of the place?"

He stopped triumphantly, looking from Stick's weak, cunning, eager face to Danny's volatile, impressionable countenance.

"How are you going to knock the bridges out?" asked Stick.

"Oh, a few charges o' dynamite will do the trick. The guys that cut the wires can plant it. Sure, it's got to be timed and timed good. It's got to be worked like clockwork. But ain't it the cat's meow?"

Danny turned from the window. One shrewd glance told Barney that he had been sold on the idea, even before his next question revealed it.

"What do ye figure we'll pull out of it?" he asked. "Dynamitin' bridges—that's no cheap job."

"Well, there's two banks. Either one of 'em might be good for fifty thousand. What'd you birds get out o' that one at Albany, Stick?"

"Sixty-five thousand." Stick's face

lighted reminiscently, then darkened again. "Of course, that was split crooked, though—I only got five thousand for mine. And then I went to Havre de Grace and dropped——"

"Fifty thou's all right for these, then," broke in Barney. "But supposin' 'twas only half that—say twenty-five grand from each one. Ain't that worth takin' a little trouble for, boys?"

"I'll tell the world it is!" assented Danny enthusiastically.

"Then you'll go in with us?"

"'Twill suit me fine. But, tell me, Barney, how d'ye come to be lettin' us cut in on this?"

"It's too big for me to handle," admitted Barney. "I need you and Stick to get me the men."

"How many?"

"I figure it'll take seven in all—one at each end o' town, two for each bank, and one for the car. I'll drive the car, see? That'll be four more. Now can you two line 'em up? We don't want no double crossers, see? This is a job we don't take no chances of bein' gypped on. Get 'em for so much straight—no splits. Then after payin' them we cut it three ways."

Danny nodded, looking across at Stick, was was biting his nails nervously.

"I'll put some fake plates on my old seven-passenger," continued Barney. "It's got speed, but it's an old boat, and I'll park it in Montreal and forget it if we get the coin. I need a new one, anyway."

Danny jerked his head toward Stick. Barney glanced across sharply.

"What's on your mind, Stick?" he questioned.

Stick sat erect, rubbing his hand uncertainly across his weak chin. He had been taking a few second thoughts, and they sobered him.

"Wait a minute, Barney," he said. "I wanta get some more dope before I go in. Now that Albany job looked easy, but when we came to try it——"

"Shoot!" interrupted Barney. "This one's fool-proof. What's eatin' you?"

"Now, about this river. What's stoppin' some guy from paddlin' across and headin' us off by phone? We gotta think of all them things."

"The rapids," answered Barney. "The water's swift for a coupla miles. There ain't a boat in town, and the river's so rocky that I'll bet none of the rubes up there ever learned to swim. Anyway, they'd never make it across there."

"Couldn't they go along the bank, up or down to where there's smooth water?"

"Listen, Stick, all we need is half an hour. Didn't I tell you there wasn't even a trail on the east side of the river? No guy is goin' to do any Marathon through them woods and rocks. And that mountain road—it's five miles straight up and down—that much in either direction, see? Even on foot it'd take an hour—and that's the only way you could get over it."

"But——"

'Besides," broke in Barney impatiently, "you don't think anybody's goin' to dope out all these bright ideas right off the bat, do you? They'll all be runnin' round like an old hen with her head cut off. By the time they've even found out that they can't go either way nor phone either way, we'll be over the line, see?"

Stick nodded his head reluctantly, his beady eyes blinking.

"Seems like you've thought of everything, Barney," he admitted unwillingly. "How long ago'd you say you was down through there?"

"Week before last."

"Well, it oughta be safe."

Barney rose.

"Then you'll go in? We wanta pull this next week, if you guys can be ready. I'm gettin' short of cash."

"Yeah, I'm game I reckon. I can't think of nothin' to queer it—unless——"

Stick paused, rubbing his chin doubtfully.

"Unless what? Out with it!"

"They ain't—they ain't got any flyin' machines anywhere in that town, have they?" he queried guardedly.

Danny showed his white teeth in an uproarious laugh. Barney gave Stick a contemptuous sneer.

"No, nor they ain't got any submarines, neither!" he said acidly. "Nor there ain't any subway tunnel under the river, Stick, as you may perhaps be thinkin', also. Get it out of your head that this is New York I'm tellin' you about. Wilmarth's only a hick town—city, or whatever—eight or ten thousand, maybe. They're dead to the world, see? And we're goin' up there to put 'em wise that they're alive—only, by the time they catch on, we'll be in Montreal. Now let's get busy and dope the thing out."

II.

It was 1:55 in the afternoon. Wilmarth, lying in the bend of the river, drowsed lazily beneath a hot summer sun. A sprinkling of languid shoppers opened and closed store doors in the business section; an occasional flivver rattled up or down Main Street. But, for the most part, peace and indolence reigned supreme.

Across the lower bridge a car rolled slowly. It was a big car, covered with dust even to the numbers on its license plates, which were indistinguishable. Its six passengers, their faces almost hidden by huge, yellow-tinted goggles and low-drawn motor caps, peered out at the snug New England city nestling among the placid hills.

The seventh passenger, who had been left just around the bend below the lower bridge, proceeded silently but swiftly to shin up a telephone pole, using a pair of regulation climbers. Once up, he drew from his side pocket a pair of stout wire cutters, hooked his left elbow about the top cross-arm, and glued his eyes to the minute hand of the watch on his left wrist.

It was 1:59. The big car drew up before Bacon's Music and Electrical Goods store, next door to the County National Bank. Five of the men climbed out of the machine and crossed the street to the Wilmarth Drug and Souvenir store, next door to the National Bank of Wilmarth. The sixth man—Barney—remained at the wheel. The engine purred silently beneath the dust-mottled hood. Within the music store, a bored clerk gazed idly through the glass door.

It was two o'clock. With a glance up and down the road, the man at the cross-arm of the telephone pole set the jaws of his wire cutters upon the shining steel of the first strand and severed it. The fifth man, emerging from the Wilmarth Drug and Souvenir store, began to walk leisurely toward the upper bridge. Telephone subscribers to the south of the city began to find their lines dead, and to jingle receivers impatiently.

It was 2:03. The seventh man descended from the pole, threw his climbers into the ditch, picked up a small bundle, and walked toward the lower bridge, leaving coils of severed telephone and telegraph wire looping from the adjacent pole. Crossing the lower bridge, with a cautious glance about him as he placed the bundle beneath the abutments at the east end, fumbled at it for a moment, and then resumed his walk up Main Street with strides a trifle longer and more rapid.

The fifth man halted at the west end of the upper bridge, laid a small bundle carefully in the tall grass beside the highway, and unostentatiously, yet with a businesslike air, climbed a telephone pole. The first and second men, emerging from the store, crossed to the car, standing on the sidewalk near the first bank. The third and fourth, also leaving the drug store, lounged carelessly be-

fore it, bending over a solitary match-flame to light cigarettes which they had just purchased within.

It was 2:05. The fifth man cut the last wire north of Wilmarth. Almost simultaneously, with a deafening roar the east end of the lower bridge splintered into wreckage of wood and metal, strewing the rapids below.

The town awoke. The police chief and his two aides, bewildered, were drawn into the swirl of the crowds panting down the street toward the scene of the mysterious explosion. Even within the two banks, shut off by stone and steel from the outer world, the news penetrated and spread. Excitement and speculation were rife. Discipline and clear-headed thinking for the moment went by the boards.

It was 2:07. The upper end of Wilmarth was practically deserted. The seventh man, walking unhurriedly against the wild-eyed human current tossing past him down Main Street, reached the car and climbed into the tonneau. The fifth man backed down the telephone pole by the upper bridge, crawled unseen beneath the abutment, and placidly lit a cigarette.

The two pairs of men outside either bank, exchanging a significant glance, turned and walked quietly, single file, hands in the pockets of their long dusters, into the two financial institutions. In the dusty car outside Bacon's Music and Electrical Goods store, the motor was still throbbing.

It was 2:10. Barney, at the wheel, had kept his gaze set stolidly ahead, even when he had heard, within the County National Bank, the crack of two revolver shots, muffled by its thick walls. From its sister institution across the street had come no sound. There, at least, things were going smoothly.

Barney had shifted into low gear. His left foot held the clutch pedal depressed, his right hovered above the foot throttle. In the tonneau the seventh man read a magazine, held with seeming carelessness in his left hand. In his right, resting carelessly across his lap beneath the magazine, was a loaded revolver.

It was 2:11. From the door of the National Bank of Wilmarth, ran the third man—Stick—the bulging pockets of his linen duster held tightly to his sides with both hands. A moment later, from the County National, came the second man—Danny. His left hand hung limp, and blood dripped from his fingers. But in his right hand he carried his linen duster, bundled clumsily together and tied by both sleeves. It clinked as he ran, and a stream of coins, oozing from one of the folds, spattered round drops of silver upon the pavement, larger and more numerous even than the fast-falling drops of blood from the other hand.

It was 2:12. Barney pressed the button of the electric horn. The scream of its piercing siren rose stridently, echoing through the valley. The fifth man, delaying only for an instant, backed hastily from beneath the upper bridge.

From the doors of the two banks backed the first and fourth men, a revolver in each hand. Wheeling, they ran for the car, which was already in motion, and threw themselves into the open doors of the tonneau.

Behind them a revolver cracked, and a bullet glanced off the rear fender. One of the gunmen, aiming across the back of the seat, threw a bullet at the County National's blue-uniformed watchman, who dropped his gun and rolled clumsily, limp arms flopping, down the granite steps and half way across the asphalt sidewalk.

It was 2:13. The car skidded around the turn and whisked across the upper bridge. The fifth man, running hard up the road, swung to the running board as the car, slackening speed, drew alongside.

"Hit her up!" he panted. "I cut that fuse—pretty short! Get as far——"

Behind them the bridge spouted débris. Planks, whirled splintering aloft, thudded down again into the wreckage. The steel rails of the Montreal & Boston, displaced, sagged slowly to the rocky bed of the stream.

The car leaped forward. The quivering needle of the speedometer crept to thirty-five, thirty-eight, forty—forty-five. Barney turned his wrist and glanced down swiftly.

"Two-fifteen!" he shouted out of the corner of his mouth. "Like clockwork, Stick—like clockwork! Twenty minutes from start to finish!"

Stick, on the seat beside him, nodded and turned to the men in the tonneau. His motor cap, unheeded, whirled away in the dust-cloud thrown up behind them.

"How'd you make out, Danny?" he questioned eagerly.

Danny Wark, his face drawn in lines of pain, eased his wounded arm with an oath.

"Fifty or sixty thousand, I guess," he growled. "If Spike, here, had kept his eye on that little bookkeeper——"

"Aw, whaddya care!" muttered Spike, the gunman. "Didn't I get him and get him good?"

"Yeah, but that's not gettin' the bullet outa my arm!" snarled Danny. "What'd ye make, Stick?"

"I don't know. We cleaned 'em—musta been forty thousand or more. We'll count it as soon as we're safe across the line—if Barney don't wreck us first."

Barney, his hands gripping the wheel, made no reply. The narrow brown road weaved and twisted like an elusive serpent, whirled relentlessly beneath the black hood of the radiator. The speedometer dropped for a moment to forty, then rose steadily, determinedly, to fifty-eight as a straight stretch loomed ahead.

Stick removed his duster, rolled it clinking and rustling into a ball, and passed it to the rear.

"Here, chuck that under the seat—and yours, too, Danny. And for the love o' Mike keep that bloody arm outa sight when we stop."

"Stop? Where? What for?"

"At the customs—just to sign a card, you know. They don't even look you over goin' up. We're tourists, remember."

The car had been away from Wilmarth at a quarter past two. At twenty minutes to three, its driver throttled down at the outskirts of the border town of Burton, falling in with the procession of tourists coming in on the other State highway from the west. The mercury in the motor-meter on the radiator had mounted dangerously in that twenty-five minutes; but Barney, ignoring its crimson warning, had driven the big car to its utmost. He was taking no chances with the danger of delay.

"Attaboy, Barney!" said Stick, looking at his watch.

Ahead of them, another big car was just drawing away from the unpretentious wooden building marked "U. S. Customs." Barney swung to the left, stopping his machine before the steps leading up to the low-roofed porch.

Just across the bridge, stretching flat and inviting, was Canada. The seven men in the car could even see the broad road, straight as a die, its far end vanishing into the blur of the plain.

Everything had gone smoothly. There remained now but a few trifling formalities, and they would be over the line with their loot.

A grim-faced inspector in a flat blue cap stepped down from the porch. From the door behind him came three other men. Barney's thoughts were already racing ahead along the straight, wide highway to Montreal. His wonder at the number of inspectors was only subconscious.

Two of the three men stepped briskly to the far side of the car. Then, with

an unexpectedness utterly astounding, all four produced large, businesslike revolvers and held their ugly, round muzzles unpleasantly close to the occupants of the car.

"Put 'em up!" commanded the inspector.

The seven motorists obeyed, gasping incoherent protests. Barney was the first to find his voice.

"What are you tryin' to do—frame us for the lock-up?" he cried angrily. "We're nothin' but tourists, see? We're just goin'——"

Hollowed steel jabbed his ribs impatiently.

"Cut that out!" snapped the grim-faced man in the flat cap. "We know you. You're the guys that robbed the two banks down in Wilmarth just now, and blew up the bridges. Pile out—and mind you keep your hands up, every last one of you!"

Danny Wark painfully raised his wounded arm.

"Ye've got us, cap!" he snarled. "But I'll be hanged if I know what went wrong. How in blazes did ye get wise to us?"

"Radio," replied the inspector tersely.

The stupefied pause was broken by one of the deputies on the other side of the car, a voluble little man with side whiskers and a gap in his upper teeth.

"There's a little place down at Wilmarth," he explained eagerly, "that's just put in a broadcasting station—plays records and stuff to the farmers. It's got to be a regular fad up and down the valley this summer. Darned near every farmhouse around here has a receiving set now. We've got one up here, too. So this afternoon, you see, when the chief, here, put on the receivers for the two o'clock concert and heard the man at the store shut off 'Old Black Joe' and start to tell about the car with the seven men that robbed——"

"Why, you poor suckers didn't have a chance in the world!" broke in the inspector pityingly. "We've been waiting for you for ten minutes. The feller at the store gave us a good description of you, too. We couldn't have missed you."

"What store—what store gave you that?" gasped Barney Broadhurst between pallid lips.

"The place you stopped your car in front of," replied the inspector. "The Bacon Music and Electrical Goods store."

OLD LAW DENIES LEGAL AID TO BOOTLEGGERS

AN old licensing act of July 7, 1884, is soon to be revoked in order that lawyers who use legal technicalities in defending notorious bootleggers may not continue to elude prohibition agents, as they have been doing in the past. Director Yellowly, of the prohibition forces, announced recently that all attorneys handling "wet" cases before the department must hereafter obtain a license from the department of internal revenue and take the oath of allegiance. In other words, if the oath is kept, the attorneys will have to drop the business of defending known violators of the liquor laws.

Three other moves were made by the director in order to secure rigid enforcement of the law. First, he intends to try to have deported all aliens convicted of rum dealing. Second, clerks in the prohibition department hereafter must refrain from speaking to one another during working hours, under penalty of being fired. Third, the names of wholesale and retail druggists and others who lose their permits because of violations, will be published.

Without Pores

by Roy W. Hinds

Author of the "Simon Trapp" Stories, etc.

HIS manner of life and his way of dealing with friends had earned him the sobriquet of "Donald, the Wrinkle," which it is well to explain, is not a complimentary appellation. A "wrinkle" is one who doesn't play square with his fellows.

Donald found it convenient occasionally to work with others who lived by their smooth speech and nimble wits. Murmurs stirred, and presently stories flew about, that Donald took mean advantages in money affairs, and that he didn't hesitate to keep his skin whole by sacrificing those for whom he professed friendship. He "wrinkled"—wilted—when put to the test. Hence "Donald, the Wrinkle."

Donald sat hungrily on a park bench. The night was mild and congenial. Had it not been for his clamoring stomach, Donald might have spent the night there in comparative comfort. A park bench is not the worst place to sleep, but when one is hungry——

He meditated. The necessity for food was vital. Donald, the Wrinkle, thought of things that hadn't theretofore occurred to him—thought of things that would have appalled him at prosperous and well-fed moments. They didn't appall him now. He was reduced to a primitive state, and he thought of primitive measures. Life to a hungry man—his own life—is sweet. The lives of others are not of so much consequence, particularly if those others are enemies. Donald thought of his own life and of his enemies.

He shuddered, but it wasn't a shudder of horror. It was a reaction of mingled emotions, induced by a tremendously serious decision. Fear had something to do with that shudder. That was apparent in the swift, furtive glance he stole about him. No one was near him. He had nothing to fear. It was no more than a thought as yet, a decisive thought, to be sure, yet a thought of which he was the sole possessor.

Another vagrant slept on a bench some distance away from Donald. That man may have spent many nights on park benches, and perhaps would spend many more. He looked it—huddled, shapeless, ragged. The sight of that man tightened Donald's decision. He didn't propose to go down to that man's level of suffering and hardship. He would make a struggle. Donald was yet fairly well dressed. He didn't look broke. He hadn't long been hungry. He proposed to eat, and he proposed to have a place to live, if he had to——

Yes, it was the only way. Slowly one of his hands crept from a trousers pocket. The hand opened and closed. Donald studied it as though measuring its strength. It was a strong hand. Donald was a strong man, young, active, and infinitely cunning. He could do it.

The idea took a definite form. Circumstances were considered. It was only natural that Donald should seek for conditions that fitted in best with his idea. The idea became a plan. The plan wove itself about one of Donald's enemies. He had numerous enemies, but only one who suited his purpose at the

moment. He gave a few minutes to reflection upon these enemies, and these reflections served only to sharpen his purpose.

Donald cursed the men who had cast him out of their friendship. They had closed their doors and their pocketbooks to Donald, the Wrinkle. He was an outcast among men who were extremely liberal to their kind and extremely bitter toward wrinkles. Donald hadn't been long back in New York from an unfruitful trip to Chicago. He had failed to trim a small-town banker whom he had "played." He had returned to find himself without a friend in his own circles. No one offered to steer him against a profitable trick. They'd have nothing to do with him. He had learned in certain and precise terms from one or two old companions just how he stood.

He had picked up stray bits of information about certain former friends, and this information came in handy now. He pieced it together, then got to his feet and walked by the huddled vagrant. Scorn was all he had for that unfortunate. A man who would live on a park bench instead of tearing a living from the world by main strength wasn't much in Donald's opinion. He contrasted that man's plight to the prosperity he would soon wrench away from the world. Donald meant business now.

Donald hadn't a cent. He had a mile to walk, but the end would repay him. He laid his course up an avenue darkened by an elevated structure. He reached his destination, on a deserted cross street, in a sinister and determined frame of mind.

The time was well after midnight. Donald darted into an apartment house. He knew the layout there; a telephone switchboard was in an angle of the foyer. The night attendant undoubtedly dozed before the switchboard. He was there to answer calls or to operate the elevator. Donald resorted to the stairs, which he attained without coming in sight of the switchboard. He moved slyly and quickly.

Donald crept unperceived up four flights of stairs. He stood at the door of a small bachelor's apartment, breathing heavily. His heart pounded from the exertion of climbing the stairs, and from the repressed excitement of his mission. Presently he knocked guardedly on the door.

Donald, the Wrinkle, cunning and calculating, relied on certain phases of Booth Morton's character. His reliance was well placed, for after a brief parley at the door—a whispered parley—Donald was admitted to Booth Morton's apartment.

They faced each other in Booth's sitting room. Booth didn't like Donald. The irritated and vindictive gleam in his eyes showed that well enough. Nevertheless, Booth was different from the others. He and Donald had been particularly close friends. Booth wouldn't of his own volition do much for Donald, but he would at least give him a chance to talk. In the end he might toss Donald a coin, as he'd toss a bone to a starving dog. But Donald had something more in view. He wanted a chance to talk, to get squared away for the adventure.

They talked. Booth scowled and grunted ungraciously. Donald explained his predicament. He had no room. He was hungry. He had been turned into the streets without his baggage. He had to have a stake. Booth listened, but he listened without warmth. He was hard and malevolent and unforgiving. He showed it.

"Can't get no stake here," he said finally. "Oughta know that. I knew about you being broke. If I was a friend of yours, I'd 'a' looked you up, wouldn't I? You wouldn't have to come here begging. I ain't looked you up. I don't care if you are broke and hungry."

Donald peered into Booth's eyes.

"How'd you know I'm broke?" he demanded.

"Heard the boys say something about it."

"The boys, eh?" Despite the fact that he asked alms, Donald's voice held a quality of anger and sarcasm. "You fellas get a laugh outa me being broke, eh? Or maybe you're all sorry for me!" and he sneered.

The last lingering hope of amicable relations and help vanished. Donald talked to gain time. He studied furtively the apartment, as far as he could without arousing suspicion. It was much as he had seen it a year previously.

"Your name comes up once in a while," Booth rejoined. "Heard you got back from Chicago—somebody said broke. I don't know where I heard it. I didn't pay much attention," he added brutally. "I didn't care."

Donald's eyes narrowed. A slight paleness crept into his cheeks as his determination approached its climax. He did not trust himself to speak at the moment. The paleness vanished. His heart began to thump wildly again. Booth was saying:

"I got just one dollar for you. That's all the cash I got on me, anyway. Glad you didn't catch me with any more."

Booth stood up. So did Donald. Their gazes were level now. Donald stooped slightly, for he was a taller man than Booth, and stronger. Booth no doubt thought it best to dispose of Donald finally. He did not soften his words.

"I'll give you the buck. Wish I didn't have it. You ain't welcome to it. It'll get you a bed, but you'll have to dig some place else in the morning. This is absolutely the last from me."

Donald made no rejoinder. He straightened, and their gazes separated. Donald drew a long, tremulous sigh, and a shudder ran over his frame. A melancholy glow kindled in his eyes. The corners of his mouth twitched. But Booth Morton misinterpreted the signs. He observed that Donald grinned in a curious sort of way, yet he found no warning in the grin. A moment of fluttering, a sinking sensation in the midriff, and Donald was steady again.

Booth decided that Donald wasn't going to express the ire his words undoubtedly had aroused, and thus give him an excuse for withholding even the dollar. He cursed himself for a fool in yielding to an impulse of compassion and admitting Donald in the first place. He hated to give the hungry Donald even a dollar. He stepped toward his bedroom.

"I'll get the dollar."

Donald sprang.

The noise of the struggle was confined to the apartment. The end came on a lounge. Presently Booth's muscles subsided utterly. Donald unloosed his fingers. He straightened up, staring and breathing heavily. His coat sleeves had been twisted and hauled upward, and now he pulled them down over his cuffs. Booth's slippers had dropped off. Donald kicked them under the lounge.

For the moment his object faded. He appeared to be in a stupor. He craved a cigarette and found one in a packet on the table. But before he lit it, before he touched it, he took a precaution his crafty brain told him would be wise—he put on a pair of gloves which he always carried for any emergency that demanded caution. Then he lit the cigarette and inhaled the smoke deeply. He adjusted his necktie. He spied his hat on the floor and, with an attention to trivialities singular in that awful moment, dusted and shaped it meticulously, smoothed back a hanging lock of hair, and arranged the hat carefully on his head. He puffed vigorously at the cigarette and for the first time thought of the shades at the windows.

He examined them. They were down full length. There was not a crack through which the interior of that room could be observed from apartments

across the way. Lucky. He found the bedroom windows down slightly at the top and lifted slightly at the bottom. He closed them and pulled the shades all the way down. He closed the small window in the bathroom. Instinctively, he wished to seal up himself and the thing he had done. He wandered warily over the apartment and kept his eyes away from the lounge. He congratulated himself that he was proceeding with great restraint, not in too much of a hurry to finish. He was on his second cigarette now.

Quickly he stepped to the lounge and flung the overhanging spread up over the body, covering it completely. His thoughts grew even quieter. He would achieve his object without fuss or fury. Then he would depart calmly. He liked that thought. He would leave the apartment a fugitive, but he would leave knowing exactly what moves to make. He would not rush off like a fool and run around in circles.

Once Donald and Booth had been fast friends. They had shared an apartment. Booth had broken with Donald for reasons akin to those which brought Donald his sobriquet—and when Booth broke with a man, there was no joke about it. Booth was vindictive and rigidly set in his ways. Donald knew Booth, and he knew Booth's habits. There stood out in Donald's mind one particular habit of Booth. In that habit lay Donald's compensation.

Everything was snug and taut now, yet Donald held back. It was a terrible thought that things might not turn out as he hoped. It would be a frighful crash, and he sought to steady himself. But that was foolish. He knew Booth's set ways. Time he got busy. He began a systematic search.

Booth's hoard was somewhere about. That was a certainty. Booth Morton had saved a good share of his money. In the days of their friendship, Booth had banked regularly but always kept near at hand $2,000 in large bills. Booth called that his "get-away jack." Booth had been a canny crook. He always had a bank account. But he had known that there might come a time in his precarious life when he would have to run while the running was good. That moment might arrive outside of banking hours, in the late night, perhaps. He would always have $2,000 at hand, enough to get him a long ways off and enable him to lie low for an extended period. Booth never dipped into his get-away jack. He carried it in his pockets sometimes and tucked it away in odd corners, but he kept it intact. Booth had ceased to think of it as money to be spent. The hoarding of that roll was part of Booth's nature. The presence somewhere in that apartment of the get-away jack was as certain as Booth's predilection for blondes.

Donald, the Wrinkle, presently worked himself into a desperate eagerness. Driven by thoughts of what he could do with the $2,000 mingled with thoughts of his plight if he didn't find it, he tossed things right and left. The $2,000 meant life, a safe get-away.

Fifteen minutes elapsed. Donald, the Wrinkle, sank into a rocking-chair in the sitting room, crushed. He gulped down a sob that rose in his throat. He was richer by exactly $1.80, the amount he found in Booth's trousers.

He sprang up and began the search anew. He hauled the body to the floor and searched in the mattress of the lounge. He seized a penknife from the table and slit open the mattress. He plucked out its innards in bunches and strips, shook them, and scattered them about.

He did likewise with the mattress on the bed and the pillows. He slid furniture about and peeled rugs away. Not a drawer was neglected, not a pocket in Booth's various articles of clothing.

Booth Morton lay amid the wreckage of his home. Mattress stuffing strewed

the floor and the body. Feathers from the pillows, stirred by the slayer's passage here and there, floated in the air. Donald did not find the get-away jack.

Booth had never kept the money in particularly secret places. He had never resorted to hidden niches in the walls or floor. He had been reasonably careful of the money, but in the old days he hadn't ever hidden it away so securely. It was inconceivable that Booth had abandoned his custom of keeping the cash on hand. He had been so set in his ways.

Donald, the Wrinkle, was baffled and in despair. He stooped and picked up one of Booth's clean-folded handkerchiefs. It lay among other handkerchiefs and collars hurled from a drawer by Donald in his frantic hunt. He shook it from its folded state, angrily.

At that moment, the full weight of the disaster descended upon him again. His jaws ground in rage. In one fierce movement he mopped his perspiring brow with Booth's handkerchief. He was about to thrust the handkerchief into his pocket when he came to his senses. He had acted subconsciously, for he was in need of a clean handkerchief—but he checked himself in time. He was too cunning to be blinded long by rage. The handkerchief bore a laundry mark. Donald dropped it, wisely, to the floor.

It was high time now that he fled. He must get away from that apartment house before dawn. Booth's watch said twenty minutes past three. Donald fought off a desire to take the watch. He had uncovered no other jewerly. The watch and chain were pawnable for perhaps $25, but, again wisely, Donald left them behind. He did take a full pack of cigarettes and another nearly full. The cigarettes were of a popular brand, and not in the least incriminating.

He stood at the door. He battled an implse to search the place again. His plight was desperate. Fleeing from such a thing, with $1.80 to consolidate his liberty! Liberty meant life, too. He took a step toward the sitting room. He thought better of it and turned again to the door. What use? He had done everything except to strip the paper off the walls and rip up the floor. Booth had cheated him, somehow. He muttered a curse.

Donald drove himself to flee. In the hall he pulled the door to behind him. Its lock snapped. He couldn't return now.

He crept down the stairs noiselessly, flight after flight. On the way down, he took off his gloves. He reached the foyer, dimly lighted at that hour. He heard a step somewhere in the rear. Donald, the Wrinkle, was too wise to turn his face in that direction. He darted into the street and away. The attendant in that apartment house had caught only a glimpse of him at best.

Donald, the Wrinkle, had forgotten about a concerted plan of flight, but one thing was clear. He would get out of that neighborhood as quickly as possible. He moved swiftly through the streets, zigzagging a little. The eastern sky displayed the first hint of gray. Donald heard the hum of an elevated train and the clatter of a horse and wagon. He reached a subway station, and presently was whirled away in a downtown local.

Donald emerged from the subway at Canal Street. He proceeded now in a more orderly state of mind. About five o'clock he went to bed in a small hotel in West Street. Like all crooks, Donald, the Wrinkle, had in mind numerous hotels of that sort, picked out during walks about the city as possible points of refuge. He was not known at that hotel. He had paid 75 cents for the room, 5 cents for subway fare, and 25 cents for two sandwiches and a cup of coffee. He had 75 cents left out of the $1.80. For that he had burdened himself with the night's terrible work.

Refreshing sleep was out of the question for Donald, the Wrinkle. He wasn't bothered at all by visions of the chaotic apartment from which he had so recently fled, but he did wonder what in the world he should do!

Of the deeds that made him a man at odds with the law, this overshadowed all. The counts on which he was wanted in a half dozen cities were petty beside this. His liberty had been in peril so long that the peril had grown commonplace. He had lived for years in the shadow of prison. But this was something else. They would ask his life for this. There is a difference.

That was the situation if the identity of the slayer became known. If his identity did not become known, Donald, the Wrinkle, was in no more danger than he had been before he stepped across the threshold of that apartment. The police were not now hunting him industriously. If his name wasn't mentioned in connection with the night's work, he had nothing much to fear.

It seemed strange now that he had conceived the thing. He had never thought seriously of its like before. It wasn't in his line, no more than it had been in Booth's line. They didn't work that way, he and Booth and the men of their circle. They were sly crooks who dressed well and talked smoothly. They were swindlers and confidence men and dealers in "sour" checks. They robbed in a manner that had something of artistry in it. They never seized a victim by the throat.

He recalled sketchily the line of thought that had led him to that apartment. Of course, his need of money first inspired the thing, but perhaps his feeling against Booth accounted somewhat for the thought only of putting Booth forever out of business. A hold-up, rendering Booth temporarily helpless, hadn't occurred to Donald at all. Why? He understood vaguely. It hadn't taken the form of calm thought, but he had shrunk from the idea of Booth telling the tale, not to the police, but to his friends. Booth would tell how Donald knocked him senseless and robbed him. Those friends, who wielded a strange and subtle power, would take some sort of revenge on Donald.

That was it. Donald had recoiled from the wrath of the underworld. That was why no other thought but to finish Booth was ever linked with his plot of robbery.

Toward the police, even now, Donald felt a brazen contemptuousness, the product of numerous victories over the law and long periods of successful dodging. They had taken him in, but they hadn't ever convicted him. Clever lawyers, cunning alibis, plausible defenses, had rescued Donald heretofore. He was wanted now in half a dozen cities, but the charges against him were not heavy enough to stir the police to more than a casual lookout.

The police would hardly think of Donald, the Wrinkle, in connection with so bold a job as that of the night. They wouldn't think of him at all unless some hint were given. The night's business really added nothing to his peril. The underworld might develop a hazy suspicion, but the underworld couldn't be sure—and those subtle forces never took vengeance unless they were sure. Donald wasn't a man who would be suspected of such a thing without a hint of some sort. He had taken great pains to avoid leaving fingerprints in that apartment. Perhaps the night attendant had caught a glimpse of him, but it was no more than a glimpse, shadowy. He certainly hadn't seen Donald's face. He couldn't give a description that would lead the police to think of Donald, the Wrinkle. Without that hint, the police would never think of Donald and murder at one and the same time. Of course, if they did think of Donald—if suspicion were turned his way—and they started out to hunt him——

That thought was what kept Donald, the Wrinkle, awake in that West Street hotel. If he were being sought on a charge so serious, if the police started out in earnest to get him, they'd soon run him down.

Donald would be easy game in such a chase. They had his picture. They had an accurate description, a detailed description. And Donald was what is known in the vernacular of the underworld as a "billboard"—meaning a man so unfortunate as to possess a distinguishing mark on his face. Men whose faces show plain birthmarks or scars are called "billboards," for they virtually advertise themselves. On Donald's forehead was a scar, a ragged scar about two inches long and a half inch wide at its widest point, running crosswise of the forehead. It was the result of a burn in boyhood. But he was a "billboard," nevertheless, and certainly a marked man if the police ever sought him industriously. A murder charge against Donald, a real man hunt, would bring him in soon enough, for every patrolman would be on the lookout then, his picture would be printed in the newspapers. He couldn't hide that scar completely for an indefinite time.

And Donald knew these things. But he also knew that he hadn't left a clew to his identity in Booth's apartment, that no one had seen him enter, and that no one had seen him leave. The only disturbing element was the step he had heard in that apartment-house foyer; and there, in the dim light, it was impossible that any one had seen his face or got more than a shadowy glimpse of his figure. The longer he thought about it, the more confident he became that the police would never be seeking Donald, the Wrinkle, for murder—hence his peril hadn't grown.

Donald got sleep of a sort, mingled with intervals of tossing wakefulness. He clung to the bed, hoping that a sane and helpful idea would come before he ventured into the streets. He must figure out some way to raise money. He might have to flee the city. If his name were mentioned in the thing he would have to fly. He simply must have money for that emergency. He determined to remain in the hotel until he had "cooked up" some sort of scheme to raise money. He was not so despondent as the circumstances seemed to warrant.

About noon, Donald had convinced himself that they wouldn't seek him at all in connection with the murder. He fell into a sounder sleep and awoke about three o'clock, much refreshed.

A newspaper—he must have a newspaper. He wanted to see a newspaper before he left the seclusion of the room. It was a cheap hotel. There were no bell boys there, but by pressing a button he finally brought to his door a surly porter. Donald was dressed. He opened the door. Donald appeared quite a different sort from the average dweller in that hotel. He looked as though he might yield a tip. The porter's air of surliness vanished. He went away after receiving Donald's order. Donald's hair was uncombed, and he had pulled a few strands down over the scar. The porter hadn't observed the scar.

The porter returned with an early afternoon edition of an evening newspaper. Donald gave him fifteen cents. He closed and locked the door.

The room spun. Donald's fate lay in the headlines. The police knew whom they sought.

He hurled the paper aside. He strode to the window and peered cautiously into the street. The sky was gloomy, and a stiff wind swept the pavements. Pier warehouses stretched in an unbroken line as far as he could see on either hand. There was a great clatter of hoofs and wheels, and a raucous sputter of powerful motors. Humanity and commerce swarmed in the wide thoroughfare, and auto horns and boat whistles pierced the din with blatant

shrieks. And amid all this activity the fugitive was conscious of an inexpressible desolation.

He turned from the window and seized a cigarette. He stared at the newspaper. He was in a fight for his life now. He gripped himself. He picked up the paper and sat down.

Donald read. The terrible fact lay revealed, yet he did not understand. How had the police connected him with the thing? That wasn't clear at all. The night attendant in the apartment house, as Donald suspected, had caught a glimpse of him, but it was a shadowy glimpse. The young man had given no incriminating description. He couldn't tell how the prowler was dressed. He hadn't seen his face. He knew only that the man appeared rather tall and slender. Certainly that hadn't been sufficient to turn the attention of the police so quickly to Donald, the Wrinkle.

Yet the police seemed positive. They let it be known that they had ample reason to suspect a notorious crook known as Donald, the Wrinkle. It was no mere suspicion. They had something to go on. What in the world could they have?

The thing held a quality of doom that appalled Donald, the Wrinkle. An imaginative reporter had made it a good story by hinting that a feud in the devious and mysterious turnings of the underworld lay at the roots of the thing, and that the apartment had been ransacked to put a hue of robbery on the crime.

And the police had Donald's picture. That picture would appear in the newspapers, in later editions that very day, perhaps. He hoped they wouldn't print the picture until next day. He would get out of the city that night somehow.

It was better, of course, that Donald knew eactly what he had to combat. He was glad that he sent for a newspaper before venturing into the streets. He must have money, if he had to resort to thuggery to get it. He would traverse dark and lonely streets that night and knock some one down if a better idea didn't present itself meanwhile.

Somehow Donald didn't feel hungry. He craved only cigarettes. He alternately paced the floor and reread the story, searching for some hint of the thing on which the police based their suspicions. There was no hint of the reason, but the bald fact stood forth as keen as a sword-blade that they did suspect Donald, the Wrinkle, and that they hunted him. Within the next hour the room became strewn with cigarette-ends, the cigarettes Donald had stolen from his victim.

Donald, the Wrinkle, could bear the restraining influences of that room no longer. A queer impulse to get outside and to walk and walk and walk came over him. He went into the streets.

If it were an advantage to numerous detectives that they knew Donald by sight, it was an advantage to Donald that he knew numerous detectives by sight. He kept a watchful lookout, the hat drawn down to cover the scar on his forehead. He mingled with street throngs in downtown New York. He kept on the move, sitting quietly for only a few minutes as he drank two cups of black coffee and ate a sandwich in a lunch room. His nerves lay quieter after that. Booth's cigarette's were disappearing rapidly. Donald prayed for darkness.

In the late evening, Donald bought a last edition of a newspaper. He sat down in a little park to read it. His picture appeared now, just as he expected. Well, that was another blow, but the oncoming night would help him. He would get to the railroad yards in New Jersey some way. He read the revised story. It was a better written story, and——

Donald, the Wrinkle, sat crushed under another blow. In the rush of preparing the story for the early edition,

one important fact had been omitted. It was in the story now, however. $2,000 in large bills had been found in the pocket of Booth Morton's pajamas jacket!

Donald's jaw sagged. The paper lay across his knees, and his hands rested on it listlessly. Hopeless, inert, he sat without strength to read further. The tragedy lay deep in his melancholy eyes.

He had searched everywhere and everything but the body itself. How had he been so stupid? He lifted the paper again. Yes, the small packet of bills had been found in the buttoned pocket of the pajamas jacket, under the robe that enveloped Booth's form. Donald was a victim of his own stupidity, one of those incomprehensible failures of a cunning mind to grasp the obvious. It was such a natural place for Booth to tuck the money! Had he found that money, Donald would have been hundreds of miles away by this time, and still going. But everything was futile now. The darkness of Donald's spirit was lightened by no ray of hope. He sat strengthless.

He sat sobbing and cursing. The newspaper, with his story and his picture uppermost, hung over his legs. He cursed his luck, he cursed the police, he cursed Booth Morton. This extraordinary conduct presently drew the attention of a policeman.

"How did we know it was Donald?" said Inspector Fournier. "Well, you can depend on it, Donald himself left a clew. We don't naturally think of crooks like Donald in murder cases. It's out of Donald's line, things like that—and we didn't even know he was in the city. He'd 'a' been safe enough if he hadn't dropped a handkerchief."

"Dropped his handkerchief, eh?"

"Not quite so plain as that," and the inspector smiled. "Not *his* handkerchief. He dropped one of Booth Morton's handkerchiefs."

"One of Morton's—— I don't see——"

"Donald made the mistake," Inspector Fournier explained, "of wiping his forehead with that handkerchief. It was clean when Donald picked it up. His forehead was perspiring, and he probably kicked up a little dust in searching the apartment. At any rate, his forehead wasn't clean. The dust settled and stuck in the perspiration. Donald wiped his forehead with that clean handkerchief—made one swipe with it, as we figured, forgetting about the scar on his forehead. A scar, you know, doesn't perspire.

"There was the handkerchief, with two soiled streaks on it, and between those a clean streak. In less than an hour we worked out our theory of the streaked handkerchief. The clean streak between the two soiled streaks represented a scar. If that were true, it was reasonably certain that the handkerchief had been used by a man with a scar on his face. We didn't know whether the scar was on his cheek or his forehead, but, following the thing through, we searched the records for a crook with a scar on his face. Among others we found Donald, the Wrinkle. It didn't take us long to concentrate on Donald. He was known as a friend of Morton. They lived together once. We sent out a general alarm for Donald. Before the day was over, we found he was in the city. You know the rest.

"Of course," the inspector added, "it was a chance, a theory, but worth following through. It was one of those vague hints that sometimes turn out all right. It just happened that Donald, the Wrinkle, wiped his forehead with a clean handkerchief, wiped it once, and then dropped the handkerchief. And it just happened that we hit on the right theory of the streaked handkerchief. In a case so devoid of clews, we formed numerous theories. The scar and the handkerchief happened to be the right one.

"And the facts worked our theory out. A scar, having no pores, doesn't perspire. Donald's forehead didn't drip perspiration. It perspired just enough to dampen the skin around the scar without dampening the scar. Chance, you say? Well, that is how detectives work—on chance. We claim nothing but ability to perceive the chances and to follow them through. Donald, in his confession, proves that if detectives neglect chances, however ridiculous those chances may appear, we might as well lock up headquarters here."

RAFAEL SCHERMANN THE TERROR OF THE UNDERWORLD

RAFAEL SCHERMANN, of Vienna, because of his extraordinary and apparently inexplicable psychic powers, is known as "the man for whom there are no secrets." Because he is able to visualize a man's past history and his future from handwriting, or even from a paper that has been touched by the subject, he has proven invaluable to the detective agencies engaged in discovering and punishing crime, and as a consequence he has become a terror to the underworld. Schermann believes that he holds his marvelous gift of second sight as a kind of trusteeship, and he contends that he must place it at the disposal of the community.

Many scientists have examined the facts of his extraordinary gift, and they are unanimous in pronouncing the facts genuine; but they frankly admit they cannot explain them.

The latest of his extraordinary detections was in connection with a big forgery in one of the leading banks of Vienna. The manager of this bank summoned Fräulein Schwartz and asked her to bring him the cashier's duplicate of a deposit receipt for about $13,500 in American money. In kronen, the sum amounted to 40,000,000. The girl was unable to find the duplicate receipt and brought the cashier. The deposit was credited to a Mr. Goldenwasser, but examination proved there was no such person and the original entry was a forgery. The bank had been defrauded of this amount.

The detectives were summoned, a letter signed by the name of Goldenwasser was examined, the entry on the ledger was scrutinized, and the manager said it was the writing of the head bookkeeper, a Miss M. An expert detective confirmed the opinion of the cashier, and Miss M. was about to be arrested. Here Herr Schermann arrived and asked to be shown the letter and the ledger entry. He examined both documents, closed his eyes, and remained silent for a while. Suddenly he grabbed the hand of the detective commissioner and declared the bookkeeper had nothing to do with the fraud.

Seating himself and closing his eyes, he said the forgery had been perpetrated by a man who imitated Miss M.'s writing. He insisted the man who committed the forgery had merely imitated the curves of Miss M.'s writing, but had failed entirely in the spirit of the writing. He then went on to say the man who forged the entry was the principal in the crime, and the man who wrote the letter was a tool in the principal's hands. Presently, from the various examples of handwriting submitted by the bank's employees, he picked the dummy, who returned the money and confessed the name of his confederate.

This is only one of many similar instances of this man's second sight, a gift with which he says he was born.

The Great Safe Mystery

& John Laurence

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

WHEN Harvey Strong and his wife, Alice, open the new safe of the Waste Products Company, the body of a dead woman tumbles out on the floor. Inspector Phillips and Detective Sergeant Wilkins are called in. Phillips finds in the interior of the safe a fountain pen which he hands over to Chief Bradfield when he makes his report at headquarters.

Bradfield takes charge of the case and proceeds to the office of the company, which is owned by John Clayton and Harvey Strong. A man by the name of John Hardcastle is the head clerk of the company. Clayton has made threats against Strong to Alice, and she at once suspects that Clayton is trying to involve Harvey.

Hardcastle identifies the dead woman as his wife, with whom he has not lived for several years, and from whom he has not heard since she ran away with another man.

Alice looks into the alibi of Clayton and discovers he has not accounted for several hours truthfully. The rings on the hand of the dead woman were changed, and no one had access to the room where the body was held, except Clayton, Strong, and Hardcastle. Clayton is trying to throw suspicion on Strong, and Hardcastle's actions lead Bradfield to suspect that he knew the woman in the safe was his wife. Apparently no one knew the combination of the safe except Strong, but Hardcastle tells Bradfield he discovered Clayton near the open safe on the afternoon of the murder.

Bradfield is now anxious to clear up the mystery of the exchange of the rings, and he learns that Clayton has gone to Roseville to stay with his sister. In a flash Bradfield realizes Clayton has gone there to get the rings which he had sent out of the office through the mail.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE INQUEST.

ON the morning of the inquest Chief Bradfield was up earlier than usual and at his office at headquarters. The message he had received the previous evening that Clayton had gone to Roseville to stay the night with his sister, had left him with a certainty that the man against whom suspicion was now turning had not gone there without an object. And to find out that object as soon as possible had made the chief start the day at an unusually early hour.

From headquarters he telephoned to the police station at Roseville, and for twenty minutes he was speaking to the suburban chief at the other end of the wire. Before the day was over he hoped to learn the results of the inquiries he had set in motion, and upon those results would depend, he knew, much of his future action. The case as it stood was too much of a puzzle for him to obtain a definite line of suspicion against either Hardcastle or Clayton. They seemed in some way inextricably tangled together.

But, two hours before the inquest was due to be opened, he received news which definitely seemed to harden the case against Clayton. The news came from Inspector Phillips whose face betrayed the satisfaction he felt at his discoveries.

"I was out to Booth Avenue last night," he said exultantly, "and here is my report."

"I'll read it later," returned the chief. "Tell me what happened."

"Thompson was quite right about seeing him on Milford Street on Saturday," continued the inspector. "I saw the superintendent and a hall man

of the apartment house, where he lives, Clinton Court. Neither of them like Clayton much apparently. He's not very free with his money, it seems. The first thing I found out was that Clayton had some lunch at four instead of five, and he must have cleared out almost immediately."

"How did he get out without passing the hall man? I understood he was on duty at the entrance all the while."

"He's supposed to be," replied Inspector Phillips, "but he takes a few minutes now and then for himself, so Clayton must have had an opportunity to get out without being seen. And another thing I dragged out of him: he was in the pantry of the restaurant between seven and eight, so Clayton could have got in then. But I found out for a certainty that he did go out, for a taxi driver in the neighborhood drove him downtown and left him there about half past four."

"That's definite at any rate," replied the chief. "You've done a good night's work."

"A queer thing happened, though," continued his subordinate. "I wasn't the first to make inquiries about the movements of Clayton. There was a woman down there yesterday morning, and she found out exactly what I have told you."

"A woman," echoed Bradfield in a puzzled voice. "How many more women are there in this case, I wonder. Did you find out anything about her—her name?"

The inspector shook his head.

"No, sir," he answered. "But the superintendent says that she told him that she and Clayton were going out on Saturday, but he never turned up. Too busy with the other woman I suppose."

Bradfield sat silently ruminating about the discoveries of the inspector.

"Looks to me, Phillips," he said at last, "as though he'd been carrying on with Mrs. Hardcastle, as Hardcastle thought. She must have found out about this other woman and raised a fuss."

"And he took the quickest way out of it," finished the inspector. "But he's been pretty cunning about it."

"Oh, yes, we haven't got him by a long way yet," continued the chief. "We've got to prove yet that he knew the dead woman, let alone murdered her. Didn't you get a description of the second woman?"

"Not much to go by," confessed the inspector. "She was dressed in gray and had blue eyes. That was all the fools noticed. She tipped them pretty heavily for the information they gave her."

Here, to the chief, was a motive for the murder of Irma Hardcastle, but he little knew how near the truth he was in some ways, and how far away he was from it in others. But the story he had heard from Inspector Phillips certainly gave more than the appearance of truth to the emphatic declaration of the head clerk that Clayton was the murderer of his wife.

"Put a couple of our best men on Clayton, Phillips," he said. "And don't show too much what you think," he added with a smile. "We don't want to scare our bird. You'll find him pretty wary, and at the first sign of danger he'll be off."

By the time the two officers arrived at the coroner's court, the small, stuffy room in which the inquest was being held was uncomfortably crowded. Bradfield noticed at once that John Clayton was seated at the side of the room reserved for witnesses, and he was talking in low tones to Harvey Strong. By the side of the latter was Alice, who was staring fixedly at the little table where the coroner was busily making notes before opening the case which had attracted wide attention.

"This, gentlemen," said the coroner in his opening words, "is perhaps one

of the most remarkable cases of murder —for the evidence you will have before you will leave no doubt that it is murder—which it has ever been my lot to investigate. As perhaps many of you have seen from your newspapers, a new, unused safe, is sent all the way from Albany to a firm in this city, and that safe is opened by the two partners of the firm, the Waste Products Company. In it is the dead body of a woman whose death we are called upon to investigate. Neither of the partners have any knowledge of the dead woman's identity, but she is later recognized as the wife of one of the firm's employees. Such in brief is the outline of a story which is without any parallel in the annals of crime. It is unlikely that we shall finish our investigations to-day, and only such evidence will be called which will allow the investigation to be carried to a further stage."

Without any more preliminary the coroner began calling upon the witnesses, a list of whom he had before him, while the pencils of the reporters present flew over their paper, recording the opening stages of the public inquiry into what had now become known as the Great Safe Mystery. Opposite the list of witnesses were a few notes which had been supplied to the coroner by Chief Bradfield, notes of the type of questions to ask and those to avoid, for the chief did not wish, even by accident, suspicion to crystallize on Clayton or Hardcastle. He wanted to strike unexpectedly at the psychological moment, when his case was completed enough to leave no lingering doubt of the identity of the murderer.

The first witness called was Harvey Strong, and, as the actual man who had opened the safe and disclosed its terrible contents, he was the center of many curious eyes and the subject of much written comment by the reporters. To Alice, not a single word was lost of her husband's evidence, and from time to time she glanced at Chief Bradfield, who sat impassively at the coroner's table, and wondered what the great detective was thinking. But she could read nothing from his face, and it was with a sense of relief that she heard the coroner say, "I have no questions to ask you, Mr. Strong."

John Clayton followed, and Alice felt a little thrill of anxiety, as she heard him relate what had happened.

"I understand, Mr. Clayton," said the coroner, consulting his notes, "that you did not receive the registered letter from your partner containing the combination of the safe?"

"That is so," answered Clayton.

"And that was the first time you saw the safe open?" continued the coroner.

Alice, like every one in the court, was watching the dark-eyed man giving evidence. But only two people noticed the slight hesitation before Clayton replied. They were herself and Chief Bradfield.

"That was the first time I saw the safe opened," answered John Clayton.

"Have you made any inquiries about the missing letter?" asked the coroner.

"No," answered the other. "I did not know about it until a few minutes before my partner opened the safe. I was forced to wait for him before I could open it."

"We are making inquiries," interrupted Chief Bradfield, and Alice noticed that he was looking at John Clayton and not at the coroner, as he spoke. "And I hope that we shall be able to find out exactly what has happened to that letter."

CHAPTER XV.

THE DEAD WOMAN'S LANDLADY.

"THAT will do, Mr. Clayton," said the coroner.

As he resumed his seat beside Harvey he betrayed no sign that the questions of the coroner had affected him in any way. But few people were watching

him, for most of those in the court were too interested in the dramatic story which was being unfolded.

The sensation of the preliminary inquiry was, undoubtedly, the evidence of the head clerk, John Hardcastle. His haggard face and the monotonous, lifeless tones in which he gave evidence, gave a curiously detached air to his evidence. As one reporter wrote, "The evidence of the murdered woman's husband was given by a man who himself seemed dead, so tremendously had the shock of her return to him in such fearful circumstances stunned him."

Although the newspapers were quick enough to state in their reports of the inquest that the police were following up important clews which were shortly expected to lead to sensational developments, these statements were nothing more than intelligent guesses, for the chief had been careful to allow no hint of the directions of his inquiries to leak out. To Alice, however, these statements brought an uneasy foreboding, a foreboding which had increased suddenly after the way the chief had looked at her, as she left the court. She had seen his keen gray eyes watching her with a puzzled air, as she clung to her husband's arm, and she could not help wondering what was behind that look.

With a chill she remembered a remark of John Clayton.

"Wives are interested witnesses, Mrs. Strong," he had said.

Did Chief Bradfield distrust her evidence as to her husband's movements? Had he already decided on Harvey's guilt, and was he considering how much was truth and how much was not, of his movements? Even the knowledge she had of Clayton's movements on Saturday, a knowledge which she did not intend to keep to herself one moment after any action was taken against the man she loved, did not wipe away the feeling of dread which had swept over her.

She would, perhaps, have felt a little less uneasy if she had known what was at the back of the chief's mind. It was the description of Inspector Phillips of the mystery woman who had said she was going to marry Clayton, and who had been making inquiries as to the latter's movements. "She had blue eyes and was dressed in gray." At the moment that the puzzled frown had come over the face of Bradfield, he had noticed that Alice had blue eyes and was dressed in gray.

"Nonsense, there can't be anything in it," he said to himself. "You are getting worse than Phillips jumping to conclusions. There must be thousands of women in this city who answer that description."

But, even if there were thousands, he felt just sufficient belief in the chance that Alice was the one to send for the superintendent of Clinton Court on Booth Avenue that afternoon.

"You can't give any further description of the lady?" he demanded.

"No, sir," answered the superintendent promptly.

"You are sure she wasn't married?"

"She must have been wearing gloves," returned the superintendent. "I never noticed no wedding ring on her finger."

"Would you recognize her again if you saw her?" asked Bradfield.

"Yes, sir," replied the other.

At six o'clock that night he pointed out to the chief, who stood hidden in the shelter of a doorway on Milford Street, Alice and her husband, as they left the offices of the Waste Products Company.

"That's her," he said confidently. "There ain't no doubt of it."

"And what do you make of that, Phillips?" asked the chief an hour later, as he discussed the news with his subordinate. "If that isn't extraordinary, what is? What the deuce does Mrs. Strong want inquiring about the movements of Clayton and telling the super-

intendent she's engaged to him, when she's married to his partner?"

"Perhaps she suspects Clayton," answered the inspector.

"That's probably it," commented Bradfield. "So that does away with the motive of the other woman, and we are where we were before."

"We're sure up against it," said the inspector, "but I should just like to have a look inside Clayton's mind for a few minutes. I dare say we should know more about it then."

"Unfortunately we're not mind readers," laughed the chief, "though the public expect us to be at times."

The two officers sat far into the night discussing every aspect of the case which both now realized was not going to be solved easily.

"We shall never get any further until we've settled some of our outstanding inquiries, Phillips," said the chief finally. "We've got a good many points to clear up. There's that registered letter for one, what Clayton was doing Saturday afternoon for another. We've got to find out where the dead woman was living, and get hold of her sister, if possible, and see if anybody's seen her with Clayton. We've got to know a little more about Hardcastle. We're only at the beginning of things as yet."

"Well, there'll be enough publicity to-morrow morning," answered the inspector. "I've been pestered with reporters all day long for the latest news."

"You gave them a touched-up photograph of the dead woman, I suppose?" asked the chief.

"Oh, yes, and asked them to feature that paragraph about reporting any woman of her age and description at once to you. Somebody's bound to come forward to-morrow or the next day, unless they're in it as well."

"I have great hopes for to-morrow, Phillips," remarked the chief.

He did not know how soon his hopes were to be fulfilled, nor yet how soon he was going to see another side of the Great Safe Mystery which was to puzzle him completely for a while, and to change entirely his point of view.

Shortly after eleven o'clock on the day following the inquest a faded, elderly woman was shown into the chief's room.

"I have come, sir," she began nervously, "because of what I have seen in the papers this morning about this safe murder. My name's Jenkins, Mrs. Sarah Jenkins."

"What did you see, Mrs. Jenkins, that made you come here?" asked the chief, who anticipated her reply, for he had no doubt this woman had come to tell him something about Irma Hardcastle.

"She roomed at my place, sir," answered Mrs. Jenkins tearfully. "It's greatly upset me."

"Where do you live?" asked the chief.

"On Merton Avenue," replied the other. "I let rooms. Mrs. Swift had two, a bedroom and a sitting room."

"Mrs. Swift?" echoed the detective.

"Yes, sir, Mrs. Irma Swift," said the landlady. "That's why I didn't think about her, poor dear, until I saw her picture in one of the papers. You could have knocked me down with a feather when I saw it. She told me she were a widow, but expected to get married again. She said she had a pension. She never went to work like the others, though she was out a good deal, one way and another."

"How long has she been away from her room?" asked the detective.

"Since last Saturday," replied Mrs. Jenkins. "I was rather surprised, for she wasn't dressed for going away. But I didn't worry, because she's been away before for two or three days, especially week-ends. Told me she was visiting her married sister in the country."

"Did she ever tell you the address of

her married sister?" asked the chief quickly.

"No, sir," answered the other. "She wasn't the talkative sort, never said much about her personal affairs, though she was lively enough. Used to go out to theaters a lot with the man she was going to marry."

"What was he like?"

The landlady shook her head.

"I don't know, for I never saw him. I asked her once why she didn't bring him home, and she said Harvey——"

"Harvey," interrupted the chief eagerly. "Was that his name?"

"Harvey was his Christian name," said the landlady. "I never knew his other name. She dropped one of her letters once which was signed Harvey, so that's how I knew, apart from her casually mentioning his name. He was very fond of her, judging by the way he used to take her out."

The detective sat silent. His keen gray eyes had a far-away look in them. Here was the most astounding news brought to him by a prosaic landlady who had been too dull-witted to draw any connection between the Harvey who posed as the fiancé of her lodger, and the Harvey who had given evidence of the opening of the safe from which the body of Irma Hardcastle or Irma Swift had fallen.

The coincident was too startling to be accidental, but what its significance was, the chief could not yet see.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN THE MURDERED WOMAN'S ROOMS.

WITHIN half an hour of receiving the astounding news from Mrs. Jenkins, Chief Bradfield and Inspector Phillips were taking the landlady in the chief's own car back to Merton Avenue. On their way they gathered a little more news from their companion who was feeling a sense of importance she had probably never felt before in her life. Certainly she had never sat in such a motor car before, nor seen one go at such a speed as the chief's great gray car ate up the road to the suburb where she had spent nearly all her sedentary life.

The chief's car was well known in the city, but he rarely traveled fast unless there were very urgent reasons. And more than one policeman on point duty, as he saw the gray car go swiftly by, saw the figure of the famous police chief sitting there with Inspector Phillips and wondered what the morrow's news would bring.

Bradfield never lost any time when he was engaged on a case. Over and over again he had had it impressed upon him in his many investigations that minutes in the first few days of a case were often worth hours later on when the scent had grown cold. His only fear was that some one had been to the dead woman's rooms before him.

"I don't think so," replied the landlady in answer to his questions. "No one has called while I've been in, and I fancy I should have heard if any one had when I was out."

"When did Mrs. Hardcastle first come and stay with you?" asked the chief?"

"About a year and a half ago. It will be two years next January," answered the landlady. "Told me she had married an Albany man who'd been killed in the war."

"Did she ever receive any visitors?"

"No. She told me she had no friends here and only a sister alive."

"Did she know this—this man Harvey when she came to lodge with you?"

"Oh, yes. Used to go out two or three times a week with him. She told me she was fond of seeing life, poor thing. I reckon that's what's brought her to her death. I shouldn't like to be in that man's shoes when her fiancé gets a hold of him."

"She always spoke well of him. I

gather," remarked the chief, who thought it rather curious that the landlady had shown not the slightest suspicion that the fiancé of her lodger had had anything to do with her death.

"Never had a cross word with him, I should think. Always singing his praises when she first came."

"But not so much lately?" asked the chief.

"Well, they grow less ardent, naturally," said the landlady philosophically.

"It's the first house on the left, past the library," she added suddenly, as the big car swung down Merton Avenue. "You can't miss it."

Bradfield nodded absently at the landlady's small talk. He was wondering what discoveries he would make in that house, wondering how soon he would be called upon to act definitely against one of the partners of the Waste Products Company. But he had to confess that the last hour had, as far as he could see, complicated affairs considerably. Yesterday he had no cause for suspicion against Harvey Strong. All his energies had been concentrated on the clews which seemed to point now to Hardcastle, now to Clayton. And here, unexpectedly, the man who had opened the safe, the man who had ordered it, the man who had appeared to have no real suspicion against him, was implicated! That was the exasperating aspect of the mystery. Clews appeared like will-o'-the-wisps, and each, after leading him a dance, suddenly became unimportant and died away. Would this last one appear a will-o'-the-wisp. too, or was it the clew for which he had been waiting, which would unravel the tangle of the last few days?

"She had the best rooms, sir," half whispered the landlady when the chief's car drew up outside the house. Now that the excitement of her journney to headquarters was over, now that she was returning with the certain knowledge that one of her lodgers had been murdered, she was beginning to feel the reaction. She was beginning, too, in a dim way to realize the publicity which would ensue when the news was widely known, and, though Mrs. Jenkins had all her life been a lady who was fond of being in the limelight, she preferred that limelight to be one of her own creating, and in her own narrow suburban sphere.

"The first door on the right of the hall," she continued, nervously rubbing her hands together, as she led the chief and Inspector Phillips up to the front door. "Her bedroom's at the back. You don't want me to come in with you?" she asked anxiously, as though she dreaded the ordeal of seeing the police in her rooms.

"Not at present, Mrs. Jenkins," answered the detective. "We'll call if we want you."

The room into which the landlady showed the two officers was very typical of a suburban sitting room, with its faded furniture and ugly pictures. However it bore one or two obvious traces of the woman who had occupied it. On the mantelpiece were four photographs, but to the disappointment of the chief none of them was of Clayton or Harvey Strong. Three, indeed, were of the dead woman herself, and the fourth was simply signed "Sissie."

"Her sister, I suppose, judging by the likeness and signature," declared the inspector. "Here's her missing hand bag," he continued suddenly, as he lifted the cushion from the couch in his preliminary search. "I wondered why we didn't find it at the time." He opened it as he spoke and emptied the contents on the table. "No purse," he added. "I suppose that is all she carried with her."

The hand bag contained a key ring on which were several small keys, a number of toilet articles, a handkerchief, and a small pocket diary.

"This should be useful," cried the inspector.

He ran his eye rapidly over it.

"Look here!" he said eagerly. "Throughout this year there's the same entry three times a week. 'Went out with Harvey!'"

"Any definite places mentioned?" asked the chief.

While the inspector slowly turned over the leaves, Bradfield waited for a reply.

"Can't see any," he answered at last. "It's just 'Went out with Harvey'—that's all."

Suddenly a scrap of newspaper fell out of the little book, and the chief bent down and picked it up.

"There's not much doubt now who Harvey is," he said dryly. "Here is his marriage announcement to Alice Barrington, the present Mrs. Strong."

"And here's the comment," added the inspector sharply, pointing to a page in the diary. Under the finger of his subordinate, Bradfield read: "Harvey married! What shall I do? He never told me. I am broken-hearted. Explains everything."

"Evidently the landlady was right, though she didn't know it," remarked the chief. "Harvey had been cooling off and warming up to the new love. This, Phillips, is another lesson that a case is never over till the man's been sentenced. I confess Harvey Strong impressed me favorably. It's pretty rough on his wife. She seemed to me to be a thoroughbred."

"Well, you said this was going to be some case, when you saw that fountain pen, and it's worse than that. First Clayton, then Hardcastle and now Strong. I can't fit things in anywhere," declared Phillips.

"Strong made no bones about denying that he had ever known her," continued Bradfield. "You remember he said she was a complete stranger to him."

"Well, at any rate it supplies the motive, good and strong," pointed out the inspector. "The same one I thought Clayton had—the other woman. He must have kept this affair pretty dark. It looks to me, from what she says in her diary, that she never knew anything about his marriage till she saw it in the newspapers. You never know what a woman will do when she's been jilted. He was pretty cool with his story of shopping on Saturday afternoon."

"There's one little puzzle, by the way, about that Saturday afternoon," interrupted Bradfield. "It was Clayton who was seen near Milford Street, Clayton, who's alibi has been shown to be untrue. How do you fit that in?"

"I don't," answered the inspector bluntly. "Any more than I can see what that fountain pen with 'I. S. from J. C.' on it means, unless they were both fooling about with her."

"No, but I shan't be satisfied till I can fit in all the pieces of the puzzle," returned his superior. "It's not good to leave ends lying loose. They have a nasty knack of causing trouble. Clayton's got a lot to explain as well as Strong."

"Well, I shouldn't be surprised if Clayton had a hand in it somewhere," pointed out the inspector, who still clung to the belief he had formed that John Clayton knew more about the death of Mrs. Hardcastle than he would care to admit.

"There's one obvious explanation which would probably clear up Clayton's movements as well," said Bradfield thoughtfully. "He may be trying to shield his partner. It wouldn't be the first time that kind of thing's happened through mistaken ideas of friendship. Don't forget they've worked together on this firm from the beginning and built it up, so they are pretty sure to stand by one another in emergencies."

"That's most likely it," agreed Inspector Phillips. "Though, if we

threatened him with being an accessory, he'd probably tell all he knew."

"We'll bring pressure to bear, all in good time," said the chief. "I don't see anything more in this diary," he added. "I was hoping there might be some address where we could make inquiries, get somebody to say they've seen her and Harvey Strong together."

"We'd better try these keys, sir," continued the other, picking up the small bunch from the table. "There are bound to be some letters somewhere. Shall I have a look through the bedroom, while you look through here?"

"Do, Phillips," agreed the chief.

When the other had left he looked round the little room, and his first step was toward the photographs on the mantel.

"There are the photographers, of course," he said to himself.

He took the photograph signed "Sissie" out of its frame and turned it over. Across the back was neatly printed the words "Charles Tree, Photographer, Littlefield, Conn." He slipped the photograph in his pocket with a little grunt of satisfaction. A little spade work, he reflected, and he ought to have no difficulty in getting into touch with the murdered woman's sister, who might be able to throw some light on the mystery. She, too, he thought, might communicate with the police, as Mrs. Jenkins had done, if she chanced to see her sister's photograph in the paper, or read the evidence of the inquest.

The other three photographs all bore the name of one photographer in the city, and it was evident that they had all three been taken within the last year or so. They showed Irma Hardcastle to have been a very pretty woman when she was alive. Her mouth spoiled her, with its weak chin below. As the head clerk had told the chief, she was evidently a woman who was easily led, and in the hands of an unscrupulous man she would be swayed without any difficulty. She was one of those unfortunate women who flit here and there, like butterflies in the sunshine, but who fly from trouble as a butterfly flies from the rain.

In a small desk were two drawers, and the chief went through them very thoroughly. One drawer contained an assortment of odds and ends which shed a light on the dead woman's tastes, but did not reveal much else. There were gaudy post cards which she had evidently been fond of collecting, a number of paper-covered novels, odd pieces of ribbon and the like, thrown there in a hopeless untidy collection.

Nothing else in the room afforded any further clews to the murdered woman's mode of life, and the chief made his way to the bedroom, where he found the inspector busily turning out a big trunk.

"Got anything?" he questioned as Phillips looked up.

"Here's a man's handkerchief," replied the other. "And with luck we ought to trace it, as it's got a laundry mark on it, 'L 139.'"

"There may be men in the house," pointed out the chief. "We'd better verify that first and see if the landlady can identify it before we start on a wild-goose chase. If a laundry's in the neighborhood it probably won't help us much. She would most likely have sent it with her own linen."

"She's not done that. All her linen is marked 'XF 2407,'" remarked the inspector."

"Have you searched those two cases?" asked his superior, pointing to two fiber cases by the foot of the bed.

"Not yet," answered the other. "Here are the keys."

Bradfield unlocked the nearest case to him and found it full of clothing. He turned the many dainty articles over rapidly until he had been completely through them, but his search did not

reveal anything likely to shed a light on the mystery.

"The other one's unlocked, I see," he commented, as he tried a key in the second case.

He had hardly lifted the lid when he gave an exclamation of satisfaction, and the inspector turned toward him with an inquiring air.

"Found something?" he asked, and then he gave a low whistle, as the inspector held out to him a photograph.

"Recognize it?"

"Harvey Strong, by all that's holy!" exclaimed Inspector Phillips. "And signed, 'Yours, Harvey?'"

"That, and the entry in her diary rather clinches it, I fancy," cried Bradfield. "Master Harvey Strong overlooked the two little points when he denied knowing the lady. I wonder what explanation he'll put up now?"

"He can't get by with the shopping stunt on Saturady afternoon again," grinned the inspector. "He took me in completely, I'll admit."

"And me," replied Bradfield. "I summed him up from the beginning as knowing nothing about it. My impressions were against Clayton and Hardcastle, but it shows you that impressions are not much good without proofs."

He turned to the case again and began turning its contents over, but without any further result. Then he rose from his knees and looked round the room. Near the window was a small dressing table, and he began turning out the one drawer it contained.

"I'm in luck's way, Phillips," he said softly after a few minutes. "Here's a writing pad, and the blotting paper might help."

He held the paper before the mirror. It had been little used, and the chief felt a little thrill of satisfaction, as the glass revealed disjointed words.

"See, Phillips. There's 'My darling Harvey' twice and 'Always your Irma' down at the bottom there."

He pulled a pencil out of his pocket and jotted down what words he could make out. Then his usual staid self gave way in an enthusiastic burst.

"Look here, Phillips," he cried. "Here's practically a whole letter, the last one she wrote. I can nearly make it out."

He pointed out the words to the inspector. Some of them had to be guessed at, some were partly obliterated, where the blotting paper had been previously used. Bradfield jotted down the words he could read, leaving spaces, and showed the result to his subordinate.

"Dear Har—" he wrote. "Meet me —Satur—4.30—place for time's sake— Last request—Irma."

"Fill it in, fill it in, Phillips," he cried. "It isn't hard."

"'Dear Harvey. Can you meet me on Saturday at 4.30, same place,'" said the inspector eagerly, "'for—for old time's sake? This is my last request. Yours, Irma.' That clinches it," he added.

"Looks like it," answered the chief. "It's damning in fact. We must get hold of a copy of Mrs. Hardcastle's handwriting at once. I expect her husband will be able to let us have something." For some time he stared thoughtfully at the reflection of the blotting paper in the mirror.

"Well, we can't have all the luck," he said finally, as he placed the pad down. "I was hoping she'd blotted the envelope as well, then we could have found where she sent it to. There's no sign of that, unfortunately, and no date."

"Oh, we've got enough without that," replied the inspector philosophically. "When are you going to make an arrest?"

"Not yet," said Bradfield. "I want to hear the result of one or two other inquiries first. They'll strengthen the case. We don't want to go to trial with

only half the evidence, you know, and then become the butt of the newspapers for another police blunder. Our man's shown no signs of bolting, and, in any case, now he'd find it difficult to get away. To-morrow ought to settle it. The best plan will be to spring a few questions at the adjourned inquest. I fancy the production of this photograph and diary would rather create a sensation, as our friends the reporters say. I can see their faces, as the questions are put to Strong."

"Well, there's one comfort," said the inspector, as the two returned to the sitting room. "The case has turned out easier than we thought it was going to be."

But the chief did not reply. He was thinking of that fountain pen with "I. S. from J. C." on it, and wondering how it fitted into the chain he was forging against the murderer of Irma Hardcastle. And there was still Hardcastle himself to be investigated.

CHAPTER XVII.

ALICE RECEIVES A BLOW.

IT was a characteristic of Chief Bradfield's methods that the more certain he felt that he had his man, the more carefully he went over the whole evidence, in an effort to detect a weak link in the chain. It was a favorite pastime of his to place himself in the position of a defending counsel, and see how he could pick to pieces the case he had himself built up with such care.

And, as he sat there, in the little room in which the dead woman must have passed the greater part of her life during the last year or so, he considered the case against Harvey Strong. He had a quarter of an hour or so to ruminate, while the inspector went to the local police station to arrange for the making of certain inquiries and the sealing up of the two rooms for as long as necessary.

The case against Harvey Strong was certainly one which would require a great deal of shaking, he reflected. There was, in the beginning, the uncertainty of his movements at the very time that the wife of the head clerk had been murdered. There were the undoubted facts that the dead woman had made an appointment with him on that afternoon, "a last request" of a woman broken-hearted by the discovery of the announcement of his marriage in the newspapers, a fact testified to by her diary. Yes, undoubtedly there was more than suspicion. It was approaching certainty.

And yet the chief had to admit himself puzzled over several points in the case. Why should that fountain pen be discovered in the safe, for example, a fountain pen which, as far as the evidence went, had been originally engraved "I. S. from J. C.!" And who had altered the I to an H? He did not see the object of that. Did J. C. stand for Clayton, and I. S. for Irma Swift?

If so, why should Clayton have given the dead woman the fountain pen? If Harvey Strong had dropped it in the safe, how was it he had a pen with such initials on it, initials which had been deliberately altered to imply that the pen was the same as the one Clayton had given him? And the more the chief puzzled over this point, the more he had to confess that he could not see where the link went in the chain. He was too conscientious to ignore any points which did not fit in, and he knew that a clever lawyer would make much of the fountain pen, would contrive, indeed, to throw a sufficiently strong suspcion on Clayton from it to make a jury hesitate before bringing in the irrevocable verdict against his partner.

There was, too, the mystery of the changed rings. He had not traced those rings, any more than he had found a solution to the reason for the change, save that they might provide a clew to

the murderer. Rings could be traced, and perhaps at the last moment the murderer had thought of that point. He half regretted now that he had not immediately ordered a search of every one in the building. It might possibly have simplified matters, though it still seemed to him unlikely that the man who had planned this cunning murder would commit the colossal blunder of keeping evidence on him a moment longer than necessary.

A further point which worried the chief considerably was the failure of Clayton to receive the registered letter containing the combination of the safe. If Phillips had not received the post office receipt for the letter from Harvey Strong, Bradfield would have given the matter no second thought, but would have assumed that Strong was lying. But a registered letter had been posted to Clayton, that was certain, and Clayton had denied receiving it. Where was it? Had any other man learned the combination as a result and made such terrible use of it?

"I give it up for the present," he said to himself, as he heard the landlady admitting Inspector Phillips. "I suppose those questions will sort themselves out in time."

Inspector Phillips had brought back with him the local captain who respectfully saluted the headquarters chief.

"It isn't often that you come out this way," he said.

"No, and I don't suppose you want me to, either," replied the chief with a smile. "Phillips has told you what he wants, I suppose?"

"Yes. I'll see that those rooms are not touched as long as you want them."

"Do you know Mrs. Jenkins at all?" continued the chief.

"Oh, everybody in the district knows her. She's lived here nearly all her life."

"Has she got any men lodgers?"

"No, sir. This house is known as the 'Jenkins Home for Lost Cats.' She only takes in females."

"Well, stop her talking as much as you can," said the chief. "I must get back as soon as I can. I think there'll be developments shortly. This place has given me some clews to our man."

Bradfield proved a silent companion to Inspector Phillips during the drive back to headquarters. He was still worrying over the discrepancies in the evidence which the case was producing, and he knew he would not be satisfied until he had cleared up the points which were worrying him. His first step on his return to headquarters was to telephone to the offices of the Waste Products Company to ask if the head clerk had returned. It was John Clayton himself who answered the question.

"I just want to ask him one or two questions about his wife," explained the chief.

"Yes, he returned to-day," announced Clayton, "though he still seems very strange in his manner. I am afraid the shock has affected him severely."

The chief found that there was a considerable amount of truth in Clayton's statement. Hardcastle's face was white and drawn, and his eyes had heavy black rings under them, as though he had had little sleep.

"Any further news?"

"We're progressing, Hardcastle," replied the chief, "and I've come along for a little help. Have you got a specimen of your wife's handwriting?"

The chief clerk put his hand in his pocket and slowly brought out his notebook, from which he extracted a worn letter.

"That is all, sir," he said simply. "It is the letter she left behind when she deserted me. It is the only one of hers I kept. I want to show it some day to that man."

"You shall," said the chief. "Meanwhile may I borrow it? It will be returned safely to you."

"Certainly," answered the head clerk without any hesitation.

Obviously the handwriting of the letter, the detective noticed at once, was so similar to that in the diary that there could be little doubt the two had been written by the same hand. Little by little he was doing the spade work which would make his case unshakable. With a few words of thanks he made his way to the partners' room.

There was a subdued air about Alice, Clayton, and Harvey Strong when he entered the room, and Harvey in particular, the chief noticed, looked as though he had had little sleep.

"Are you worrying about this, Mr. Strong?" he asked.

"Of course I'm worrying," came the answer. "It has been a greater shock to me than I realized at the time. I feel as though my vacation had done me no good whatever. I can't imagine how the poor woman could ever have got in the building, let alone in the safe. It makes one suspicious."

"Mr. Strong thinks it must be some one of the firm," interrupted Clayton. "And he dreads to think who it might be."

"That's a fact," answered Harvey Strong, his usually sunny face wearing a worried look. "I dread to think who it might be. I wish it were all over. The anxiety will become unbearable to me before long."

"Then you'll have to go away," interrupted Alice. "I am sure Chief Bradfield is not suspecting any one here."

There was a challenge in her voice which the chief did not fail to notice.

"That would be giving away secrets, wouldn't it, Mrs. Strong?"

"Do you suspect——"

"We have discovered where the dead woman lived," answered the chief, and his keen gray eyes did not fail to see Alice's sudden look of fear. "And one or two letters we found will, I think, considerably help our investigations."

"Letters!" cried John Clayton, and his eyes gleamed.

"We have found a copy of one," continued the detective evenly, "in which the dead woman made an appointment for 4.30 on the day she was murdered."

He was looking at Harvey Strong as he spoke, but the latter betrayed no sign of astonishment.

"Well, all I hope, Chief Bradfield," Strong said quietly, "is that you have got the name of the man with whom she made that appointment."

Alice nodded without speaking, but the chief noticed that she had gone as white as a sheet. It was Clayton who was the first to speak.

"You've found a copy of the letter making an appointment on Saturday afternoon?" he asked, echoing the detective's words. "Then you know with whom she made that appointment."

Bradfield shook his head, and he was quick to notice the color slowly returning to Alice's cheeks after he had spoken. He had no intention yet of showing the cards in his hands. He was now playing a game of bluff, and he would put his cards down on the table when he was certain that he had an unbeatable hand. And as yet, though he felt that he held winning cards, he was not quite certain what cards were held by the three men who seemed so inextricably concerned in the mystery he was investigating.

"Unfortunately, no," he answered. "The copy of the letter I am referring to appeared on her blotting pad, and the name of the man to whom she wrote the last letter she ever wrote, does not appear."

He fancied he saw a look of relief, not only on the face of Alice, but also on that of John Clayton; but two things puzzled him and quickened his senses, though his face betrayed no signs of what he was thinking. One was a swift exchange of looks between Alice and Clayton, and the other the apparent

indifference with which Harvey Strong received the news. He acted and spoke, indeed, as though the contents of the letter could not affect him personally.

"What a great pity the name didn't appear, Chief Bradfield," Strong remarked. "It would have lessened your difficulties, I should think, immensely and relieved our anxieties."

"I feel as though you were suspecting one of us," said his partner with a forced smile. "I am sure we are being followed about, if we only knew it."

"If you only knew all the police were doing, Mr. Clayton," answered the chief in a noncommittal voice, "you would, I am sure, think as we do, that suspicion is not proof and never can be. No man is hanged on suspicion."

"They might be arrested though," returned Clayton. "And that's pretty bad for any man, even if he is innocent."

"I never arrest until I am sure."

Bradfield's reply brought a certain amount of relief to Alice's tortured soul. She knew that the chief would not be deceived by false evidence, but she was feeling so shaken by what he had said a few minutes previously about the finding of the copy of the fatal letter of appointment, that she was afraid to speak. She had no doubt at all that the chief must have read very much the same letter John Clayton had shown her, the letter that implicated her husband so terribly!

She fought fiercely to control herself, for she could feel the eyes of the man of whom she was now afraid, watching her with ill-concealed triumph. She knew that if she spoke now he would not hesitate to turn with all his viperish malignancy against her husband, and for all she knew he might yet make the case against Harvey so apparently complete that she would be compelled to bargain with Clayton to save her husband. With a little inward shudder she rose from her chair.

"If you will excuse me," she murmured. "I have some instructions to give Miss Payne which I had almost forgotten."

"How is she?" asked the chief, as he politely held the door open for her.

"She is almost her own self again, Chief Bradfield," she replied as she passed by him. "Do you want to talk to her?"

She was half in the corridor as she spoke, and the open door hid her from the view of her husband and Clayton. She made a quick beckoning movement to the detective with her hand and then placed her fingers on her lips. He looked at her with no change of expression in his gray eyes and then with an almost imperceptible nod that he understood, as he closed the door behind her.

"Now that Mrs. Strong has gone, gentlemen," he said to the two partners, "I must tell you in confidence that we are not progressing as we hoped. This is one of the most baffling murders in my experience, but one has to buoy the women up, or they will become nervous."

"My wife's not of the nervous sort," answered Harvey Strong a little irritably. "But I quite see your point. Isn't there anything we can do? Don't you suspect any one at all?"

"What grounds have I to suspect any one?" asked the chief. "Whoever has done this murder has done it so cleverly that he has left practically no traces behind. We are making inquiries at Albany, and I hope that we shall get some clew from there. It may be the dead woman was in the safe when it arrived in the building."

He pulled out his watch.

"Three o'clock, and I haven't had any lunch yet. I really must get along. I'll find my own way out."

As he turned at the end of the corridor into the passage leading to the front of the building, he saw Alice

standing there with an anxious look on her face.

"You want to see me, Mrs. Strong?" he asked at once.

"Yes, yes," she replied eagerly. "I must see you as soon as possible. I am in a terrible position. Oh, Mr. Bradfield, I—I am afraid——"

"Afraid—afraid of what?"

The appeal in Alice's blue eyes, the agitated clasp of her white hands, told him only too plainly of what she was afraid, the arrest of her husband! He wondered how much she knew, wondered if he were going to hear part of the truth at last, or whether she was going to try to defend her husband."

"I can't tell you now," she answered, her voice trembling with anxiety. "I must see you alone. Oh, Mr. Bradfield, I wouldn't ask you, but—but it's a matter of life and death to me."

"Can you come and see me at headquarters?" asked the chief. "I'll be in any time you like to tell me."

"I'll come round this evening after dinner, about eight," she whispered. "My husband is going to a meeting at his club. It was arranged before he went on our honeymoon, or he would have put it off. You don't know what a load you have taken off my mind. And—and—please, you won't do anything till I see you?"

Bradfield nodded, but he made a mental note to double the watch on Harvey Strong. He had no intention of allowing a pretty woman to use him as a cat's-paw to save the man she loved.

"At eight o'clock, then, Mrs. Strong."

"Now what the devil does she want? Things are beginning to look interesting. That letter-seems to have upset her."

Over a hurried meal he tried to puzzle out what was Alice's object in seeking an interview with him, but with little success, and by the time he had returned to his office at headquarters, he had decided that the future was the only thing which would answer his questions.

He found on his arrival that Inspector Phillips was out of the building, but a certain amount of news was coming through as a result of the inquiries he had initiated.

"We've heard from Albany," said Sergeant Wilkins, "but its chiefly negative. The manager of the safe company states that the safe was sent locked, and that neither of the two men who delivered it had the slightest knowledge of its combination. He recognized Mrs. Hardcastle, of course. She was very popular down there, and he said that Hardcastle was a thoroughly reliable man. He can't understand the change in him, however. Said he was human enough in Albany, though he was always rather quiet."

The chief nodded at the news.

"I didn't expect much more," he replied. "Especially now that we know that she was certainly alive on Saturday morning. Did Inspector Phillips leave any message where he was going?"

"Yes, he said he was going out to Booth Avenue," replied the sergeant, "and expected to be back between six and seven."

It was, as a matter of fact, nearer seven than six when the inspector did return, and his cheerful air told the chief at once that his journey had not been fruitless.

"I had a brain storm," he announced, "and I've been touring the laundries in the neighborhood of Booth Avenue with this handkerchief." He pulled out the man's handkerchief which had been found in the rooms of the murdered woman.

"Got any result?"

"That mark, 'L139,' is the mark used on the linen of Clayton," cried the inspector with ill-concealed satisfaction.

"That is certainly unexpected!" answered the astonished chief.

To be concluded in next week's issue of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE.

Little Adventures in "Con."

The Twitching Lip

by Edgeworth Downer

Author of "Great Escapes," "Embezzlers," etc.

ONE of the greatest difficulties encountered in dealing with the confidence men who prey on business people, is that these swindlers are frequently business men themselves and cloaked with apparent respectability. They are wolves in the camp of the sheep, and it is always a task to identify them and drive them out. Thus all the great master conspiracies against wholesalers and credit men in this country have been conducted by other jobbers and extenders of goods on trust. Supposed to be working on the side of honesty and business integrity, they are, in fact, using the facilities which are based upon these principles of commerce to further their nefarious ends.

In Philadelphia, not long ago, a nest of these disreputable wholesalers was discovered, and a big conspiracy against other jobbers was disclosed. As a result of these revelations ten men went to prison, and fourteen others saved themselves by fleeing the country. From one and one half to two millions had been stolen by this band before a clever detective finally brought its members to book.

The key to the long-continued success of these conspirators and to all credit frauds is to be found in the device used for obtaining goods on trust. In previous articles I have already described the usual methods of proceeding. Here we shall see the thing done in a more complex and much more effective manner. To understand the scheme clearly, let us take the adventures of one of the many agents of this Philadelphia crew of master minds. His name, for our purposes, is Irving Blatz, and he had been an underworld salesman, fence's agent, crooked disposer and sharper as long as he had been a man.

One morning, a few years ago, Blatz was called into the office of the crooked jobber in Philadelphia and asked whether he was ready to take the field. Replying in the affirmative he was handed a list of staple silk and other textile goods and told that it contained all the merchandise he was expected to get without paying. He was told that the little city of Oaktown, Ohio, was waiting for the touch of his delicate hand.

At the same time the receptive Blatz was handed about twenty-five thousand dollars in endorsed notes, bearing the signatures of men with unquestionable ratings, five or six thousand dollars in cash, and, last, but not least, a roster of wholesale merchants and their credit men from whom she listed goods were to be ordered, and who were to be asked for the credits desired. A sucker list, of course.

Such enumerations of susceptible jobbers are compiled by various methods and constitute one of the most valuable properties of the bankruptcy and credit-fraud shark. If a jobber is known to be trying hard to extend his business and is taking some chances in this effort, down goes his name, with as much information as can be got concerning him. If an old house has made a change and put a young and inexperienced man in charge of its credits, he, too, is listed. If a new firm enters the jobbing field it is always worth a try, for it will likely have little knowledge of the black sheep of the business world. These sharpers are continually comparing and exchanging information. They have ways of getting men inside the houses they hope to trim, and these men discover the weaknesses and peculiarities of the credit men, which are then played upon. The names of firms and credit experts appearing on such lists, as susceptible to certain types of games, would give the average business man a rude shock.

Another fact about these fraud conspirators that the reader needs to have clearly in mind is the care with which the crooks select their goods. They do not want simply any sort of valuable merchandise, or even an indiscriminate assortment of goods belonging to some fixed line. Instead they select precisely what is most easily salable, most readily transported, and hardest to identify in case of a raid. Moreover, these crooks often have the goods sold before they steal them. There is a demand in the underworld, among the crooked retailers, for a certain bill of goods. The crooks supply it by getting just that special consignment on credit and then decamping. That is a common manner of operating.

Thus Irving Blatz was commanded, among other things, to get about four thousand dollars' worth of silk stockings of a certain manufacture, and in this fact reposes considerable grim humor. The factory in which these stockings were made was situated less than four squares from the jobbing house of the conspirators in Philadelphia, but Blatz was sent out to Ohio to get the stockings on credit, ship them back to the Philadelphia house of his captains, and decamp without paying for them. To protect themselves in case of search, the crooked jobbers ordered about five hundred dollars' worth of the stockings directly from the neighboring manufacturers, paid for them by check, and kept both the canceled check and the bill for the goods in their files, to show as evidence of honest purchase. The stolen four thousand dollars' worth of similar stockings were, of course, stacked up with those that had been purchased. But this is only a detail of the sorry history of Irving Blatz and his bosses.

One fine morning, not too long ago, Blatz appeared at the best hotel of Oaktown, scrawled his name grandly upon the register, and announced that he would be a guest for some weeks. He had come to look for a business opening. Later in the day Mr. Blatz sauntered over to the First National Bank, introduced himself to the cashier, stated his business in the community, gave the Philadelphia jobbers as reference, and opened an account with the bank by depositing his cash, five or six thousand dollars.

This detail of his business accomplished, Blatz strolled about town until he found a large, deep storeroom on the main street, suitable for the purpose he had in mind. After renting it from its owner he summoned a painter to cover the front windows with frosted soap, so that passers-by might be unable to observe the activities inside, got a few carpenters to throw up long and high banks of shelves running down both sides of the storeroom and across the back, had a counter built across the front of the store, so that no customers could penetrate to the rear, partitioned off a

little private office for himself in one corner, and was ready for business—architecturally at least.

In the course of a few days there arrived several large crates. Two of them contained a miscellaneous assortment of goods. These Blatz spread out upon his tables and counter. The other two contained cartons of various sizes and grades in that state of unpreparedness which merchants call "the flat," which is to say that the pasteboard boxes have not yet been folded and put together, but are stacked flat, waiting for the finishing touches. Another and smaller crate contained an assortment of stickers and labels.

On the following day there arrived from Philadelphia a crew of experts who went to work immediately behind the frosted windows of Blatz's store. They took the flat cartons from the crates, folded and pasted them together into box shapes, stuck on the labels, wrote and stamped on the size and price marks, and piled the empty new boxes in orderly ranks upon the new and unsullied shelves of the store. Thus by the mere use of some empty cartons, some labels, a paste pot, and some rubber stamps, the store of the new merchant was made to look as if it might be crowded with all manner of manufactured textile goods and wearing apparel for men and women. In reality there was no merchandise in the place save the old job lots laid about on the counters and tables. The whole place was a hollow shell.

The next step in the conspiracy was taken by the Philadelphia jobbers. They asked the standard commercial rating concerns for a report of Irving Blatz, of Oaktown, Ohio, as if Blatz had asked them for credit, and they were investigating his rating. As a result of this request from one of its subscribers, a rating company sent one of its reporters to interview Mr. Blatz, who was secretly waiting for this important visitor. No one could have surmised this fact from the new merchant's behavior.

"Mr. Blatz," said the rating reporter, "I have been sent by Bump & Company to get information for a rating."

"Wot's that got ta do with me?" asked Blatz morosely. "Wot you want?"

"A financial statement," said the reporter.

"Why?"

"It's customary."

"Wot fer? I don't need no rating. I pay cash."

"You may want credit in the future."

"Naw," said the merchant, scowling. "I got all the credit I want."

The reporter was patient and persuasive. It took him a quarter of an hour to explain to this exceptionally stupid business man the advantages of being rated. But the peevish one was finally brought round and began grudgingly to give a few statements of fact.

"Well, I got fifty t'ousand dollars' worth goods in de place," he began.

The investigator followed Blatz's gesture and let his eye survey the fine array of empty boxes. They looked as though they might contain goods worth the mentioned amount.

"What about accounts receivable?" the reporter asked next.

After much show of not understanding and much long explaining that accounts receivable meant any moneys or credits due him from other responsible people, Irving Blatz got out his portfolio and displayed before the pleased eyes of the rating man the twenty-five thousand dollars in first-class notes with which Blatz had been provided before he left Philadelphia.

"Excellent," said the inquisitor. "Now, how about cash?"

Mr. Blatz rose and backed away defensively, with a growl in his voice.

"You go a little too far, young man," he said. "Whose business is it to know how much cash I got? Who wants to know?"

"We do, if you want a rating," said the reporter.

"Nix on dat," said Blatz. "I don't tell nobody how much cash I got. You take me fer a sucker?"

There was a good deal more explaining and persuading to do before this obstinate man finally relented and said:

"Well, I got about six t'ousand in de First National Bank. Dat's all de cash I got right now."

Having been so far converted, Blatz began to thaw and become friendly. He asked a good many questions about the rating business and how it made its money. Finally he even let himself be persuaded to subscribe for the service and gave the reporter a check for seventy-five dollars.

The pleased young man found out at the bank that Blatz had told the truth about the amount of his deposit. He was impressed by the notes and he had no reason to suspect that the boxes in Blatz's store were empty shams, so he wrote a very flattering report of the new merchant, sent in his check for the subscription, and saw to it that Irving Blatz of Oaktown was immediately listed and well credited. A copy of the reporter's statement was, of course, sent to the Philadelphia jobbers who had asked for the rating originally. The day after this report had been received at headquarters, Irving Blatz received a telegram from Philadelphia saying: "Sally is completely recovered. Nothing to worry about."

Just what this kind of message has to do with the retail dry-goods business may be puzzling to the outsider, and code readers may put their own interpretations upon it. There is, however, just one correct rendition: "The report has been received. Go to work and get credit."

Mr. Blatz acted with a promptitude born of greed. That same day he took out his list of sucker credit men, his list of wanted merchandise, and his faithful fountain pen. On the very best of specially prepared stationery he had letters typewritten to the suckers in his line, enclosing moderate orders for goods and bearing the signature of the new merchant.

In the course of a few days came missives from the jobbers, politely asking Mr. Irving Blatz who he might be, and by what right, sign, symbol, or token he was emboldened to ask any such credits. Mr. Blatz naturally responded that he was rated by the best firm of credit experts in the country, and that he respectfully referred his inquirers to this company for further information. In due course these inquiries were made, and, satisfactory answers having been given, the goods were shipped and shortly arrived at the store of Irving Blatz in Oaktown. Here Mr. Blatz performed a very simple operation on the cases. With a tool especially devised for the purpose, he scratched off his own address and that of the original shippers from each crate and substituted other addressors and addresses. In this wise he concealed the true origin of the packages and immediately put them in shipment again. By dint of reshipping the goods finally arrived in the warehouses of the Philadelphia jobbers who were the masters of the conspiracy. The four thousand dollars' worth of silk hosiery got there in this manner, and so did many thousands of dollars' worth of other goods.

What Irving Blatz did after this, will already be clear to readers of my earlier articles. He paid promptly for the first shipments. Then he placed larger orders and paid for them as well. Next came still larger bills of goods, paid for once more with unusual promptitude. Finally came orders four or five times as big as any placed before. Since Blatz had always paid promptly, and since he was a rated man, the jobbers shipped the goods once more. Blatz scratched off the names from every one of the crates

that ever entered his place, first or last, and every case eventually reached the Philadelphia jobbers. Not a dollar's worth of the new merchandise ever went to his shelves or counters in Oaktown, or was sold there. Finally, when the last great shipment of goods had arrived and had been duly reshipped, Blatz simply disappeared, and the astounded creditors came in and found his beautiful assortment of empty boxes.

But about the time Mr. Blatz played this fine little game in Ohio, several other agents of the central schemers did similar stunts in other parts of the Middle West. There were two particularly atrocious frauds of the kind at St. Louis, Mo., and East St. Louis, Ill., committed in two shops operated by the same men. Having two stores and two credit lines, the crooks had given their creditors both barrels. A detective employed by the National Association of Credit Men was sent out to investigate. He could find very little in either store that looked even remotely like a clew. But, being experienced in his work, he sent to all the abused creditors of these two sharpers and asked that every letter and scrap of other correspondence ever received from the rascals be sent him at once, so that he might study these papers and see what was to be read from them. In the course of two weeks he collected about a hundred letters from the files of the various creditors, took them to his office, and went to work on a large table with a magnifying glass.

But there was little to be told in this way except that all kinds of hands appeared to have operated the single typewriter on which all the letters had been written. The detective immediately examined the initials which stenographers commonly place at the foot of letters, together with those of the dictator. He found that many different sets of initials appeared there. Here, at least, was something to work on.

The detective took the pile of correspondence and sorted it all out in stacks, according to the initials of the stenographer. In all there were about a dozen stacks. A little further examination of the dates in these various stacks revealed the fact that the crooks had hired a different girl every week, and that the letters of identical initials had in every case been written between Monday and Saturday of a single week.

So much was clear. The crooks had decided that no typewriter girl was going to remain in their employ long enough to find out anything about their business. So they hired a new girl every Monday and let her go on Saturday.

If he could find some of these girls, the officer thought, he might get real information. Surely they would all be angry over their brief employment and causeless dismissal. So he began a search among the typewriter companies which furnish stenographers to users of their machines. Attempting a guess at the make of the machine from the letters, the detective hit upon the correct agency at once, but it was not so easy to find the girls. Only one who had been sent out to work for the credit crooks was still on hand, and she was a bit empty-headed and lacking in memory. She could recall only that one of the crooked partners had one bad eye. Which one she did not remember. Probably it was his left eye. She couldn't be sure.

After considerable search the detective found a second girl who had worked a week for the crooks, and from her he got confirmation and a little elaboration. One of the partners had a bad left eye. The other one had no such defect, but he had a protruding lower lip, which often quivered when he got a little excited or talked rapidly. She gave fairly accurate descriptions of the men, but she could recall no peculiar circumstances or bit of suggestive conduct that had come under her observation.

Next the detective traced one of the

many stenographers into Arkansas, where she had married and settled down. This girl added just one piece of information to the growing pile. On the Friday night of her single week's employment she had been given a large registered letter to mail. It had been sent to Dover, Delaware, to an address she could not recall.

Returning to the first two girls, the officer now found that each of them had sent off a similar registered letter on Friday night, and in both cases to Dover. He took the night train for Dover, with nothing more to work on, and settled down in the Delaware town to do some weary hunting. Unable to proceed otherwise, he finally appealed to the Federal officers, and they looked up the records of the registered mail covering the period in question. They soon found a weekly letter had been coming from St. Louis, addressed to a street and number in Dover. There the credit men's detective finally came upon a woman who was evidently the wife of one of the conspirators. She was suspicious to the core and as close-mouthed as a bivalve, but she did let slip the information that her husband was in Baltimore, and that he had no business in Dover.

The officer hurried at once to Baltimore and began a new search. Here, by making guarded inquiries among truckmen, he found the trail of a good deal of merchandise coming from St. Louis, too much, in fact, to lead anywhere in particular. He found, also, that many crates and bales of goods were being carted from certain addresses in Baltimore and sent to Philadelphia, where they were consigned to a firm of wholesalers, the crooked jobbers, to be sure. But all this meant nothing to the detective at the time. He was on the trail of the two flown merchants from St. Louis, and he had as yet no suspicion of a general conspiracy.

After many inquiries, the officer found the trails of goods in Baltimore reaching into too many directions. There was nothing for it but a wearisome job of leg work. It was a matter of elimination, so the detective set out to find the man with the bad eye, or his partner with the twitching lip. He reasoned, of course, that the two crooked partners probably had their headquarters in Dover and had opened a new store in Baltimore, for the double purpose of selling the old loot and acquiring a fresh lot by means of a new credit cheat, worked up as Blatz had done it in Oaktown and these two in St. Louis and East St. Louis.

Day after day the officer went his way, dropping in on merchants in the guise of a salesman and watching for the bad eye or the twitching lip. For weeks he did not find either. Then, when he had about despaired, he walked into an obscure shop one late afternoon and put his sample case beside him in the front of the store and asked to see the proprietor. A well-set up and smartly dressed business man came forward and protested that he was stocked up and needed no more goods. The officer looked him over carefully. He certainly had no ocular defect; but perhaps the lip would twitch.

The mock salesman began to expostulate and argue and insist on showing samples. Immediately the merchant grew emphatic and excited. His voice rose, he waved his hands and flashed angry eyes upon the disguised detective. Suddenly, when his excitement reached its height, his lower lip began to tremble spasmodically.

The officer stood and stared at his quarry. It was the end of his weary trail. But, though he had found the man, the detective was astute enough to know that his chain of evidence was still weak. He made no arrest; he betrayed no sign of recognition. Instead, he took up his sample case and walked away in assumed fury.

Now he began to watch the place, intent both on catching the second partner and on watching the come and go of merchandise. The man with the bad eye did not appear, but the surveillance on the incoming and outgoing bales and crates soon gave the officer an unanticipated thrill. Every case that flowed into the Baltimore shop went out again with its labels changed, and every single package was consigned to the jobbers in Philadelphia. A light broke in. This store in Baltimore must be only a link in a fraud chain, whose beginning and end lay in Philadelphia. The man had sought a mouse and found a lion.

A little more investigation showed that crates and bales and boxes came tumbling in to the Philadelphia jobbers from a dozen sources at once. The trails led to all parts of the country. It was a job too big for a single officer to handle, and the Federal agents were quietly called in and set to work. By watching the mails of the Philadelphia jobbers, keeping a sharp scrutiny fastened upon new merchants who opened lines of credit in the manner explained in the Blatz case, and by trailing shipments of freight from town to town, back and forth, eastward and westward and then back east again to the Philadelphia jobbing house in each case, the government men finally piled up enough sure evidence to warrant a series of raids upon the jobbers and their outlying agents.

Ten men went to the Federal prison, and fourteen fled for their freedom, and that was the end of the great enterprise.

ESCAPED CONVICT IS SAVED BY WARDEN'S PLEA

WHEN the case of Charles Greer, who escaped from Sing Sing Prison last June, came up recently before County Judge Bleakley in White Plains, Warden Lawes of Sing Sing persuaded the judge to dismiss the indictment. Greer was sentenced to a term of from 20 years to life as a result of having pleaded guilty to murder in the second degree for his part in the killing of Patrick Kane, manager of a chain grocery store in Port Chester on May 24, 1920. Kane fought Greer and two other robbers who attempted to hold up his store, and, in the skirmish which resulted in his death, he was shot six times. In his plea for clemency for the prisoner, Warden Lawes referred to the excellent record of Greer since he had been in Sing Sing, also the fact that, in making his get-away from the prison, he had assaulted none of the attendants. Because of his attempt to escape, Greer will have an added two and a half years to serve in prison.

COSTS LITTLE TO RUN OZARK VILLAGE

IN the Ozark Mountain region of southern Missouri there is a village comprising 750 persons which it costs the comparatively small sum of $275 a year to run. The town is Mansfield, and its governing body has a full quota of more than fifteen officials with the various boards and committees. The salary of the mayor is $2 a month; that of the attorney, $20 a year; the clerk receives no salary, only his fees; the health officer does not even get the $1 a year; the police judge receives only 15 cents for each assessment, or about $25. The collector and treasurer each receive commissions that amount to about $100 a year, and the night watchman receives nothing at all from the city, his salary being paid by the merchants. The record for the highest salary goes to John Cody, who holds the combined positions of chief of police and street commissioner, for which he gets $15 and the poll tax.

Headquarters Chat

WE can't tell you how much we have always wished we had more space for the comments, praise, and criticism of our honorary editors—you readers. But we just haven't got it, that's all. However, from time to time it gives us pleasure to print a few samples. Here are three that need no comments from us. We are grateful to the writers of these letters as we are grateful to the writers of hundreds of other letters, all of whom take the trouble to aid us in producing a magazine which will be more to their liking. Don't think that any editor who is worthy of the name resents criticism, but remember that he always welcomes it and is most thankfully appreciative of any that is sent him.

"DEAR EDITOR: May I please compliment you on the November 11th issue in which appears 'The Elusive Third,' 'Automatic,' and 'Simon Trapp's Detective Agency.' I will state, and defy any one to argue with me, that the above-mentioned stories are one-hundred-per-cent. all-around good detective stories.

"I have been reading your publication for the past three years and will say that 'The Elusive Third,' by John Jay Chichester, is the best I have ever read by him.

"'Automatic,' by Arthur Mallory, is very clever and also possible. And last, but not least, 'Simon Trapp and His Detective Agency' is very clever and something entirely new. But, then, Mr. Hinds is always getting up something new for old Simon to do.

"E. O. HOWE.

"Marysville, California."

"DEAR EDITOR: I have been a constant reader of your DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE since 1918. I notice often little communications from readers regarding their favorite writers, so I thought I would contribute a letter in praise of Herman Landon, Adele Luehrmann, and Doctor Poate. I like Thubway Tham better than all, but lately he does not appear so often, so I surmise the writer is sick. Herman Landon was always in the lead till he put 'The Screaming Alibi' on page 1 of the issue of December 2d. On page 28 he tells about Detective North placing his flash light in the crevasse of the old chimney to draw the fire of his assailant. It seems the second bullet fired strikes the flash light, nearly demolishing it. He finally overcomes his assailant in the pitch-dark attic on page 30, and Landon states Detective North reached for his flash light in his pocket and threw the rays down on old Litner's face, who was lying on the floor. Landon does not state whether the detective had one or a dozen flash lights in his pocket, but it appears absurd that a detective even in fiction carried more than one. Tell Landon we forgive him this time up here in Detroit, but not to overburden the detectives of his stories with flash lights again, or they will get round-shouldered and incapacitated for heavy work. Yours for more good stories. WILLIAM E. GLEASON.

"Detróit, Michigan."

"DEAR EDITOR: I see some recent criticism of 'Hounded Down,' published some time ago, and have stepped in to express my opinion of this story. For six years I have read the DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE consistently and have

yet to read a story that has held my interest and made me so eager for the next issue to be released as has 'Hounded Down.' Doctor Bentiron, The Black Star, The White Rock, The Benevolent Picaroon, The Gray Phantom, and others are looked back upon and forward to with fond remembrances and anticipation, but none of these excels the story in question.

"The man who thinks this story is not true to life—well, to say the least, he has lived only one life.

"Once in a while I really wonder how a story got by the 'hardened old cuss' who writes the Headquarters Chat, but, then I realize that I am only one of the many thousands who must be pleased, and I am frank to admit that I always get my fifteen cents worth.

H. Grady Davis.

"Spokane, Washington."

WOMAN RAFFLES ARRESTED

MRS. HARVEY E. JESTER, wife of a Washington business man, was recently arrested in New York, where, under the name of Mrs. Emily Armstrong, she operated on hotel guests as a female Raffles. The police discovered her true identity by a comparison of her finger prints with the records at headquarters. The arrest of this clever and dignified matron of thirty-five is the culmination of a series of robberies in railroad terminals and hotels.

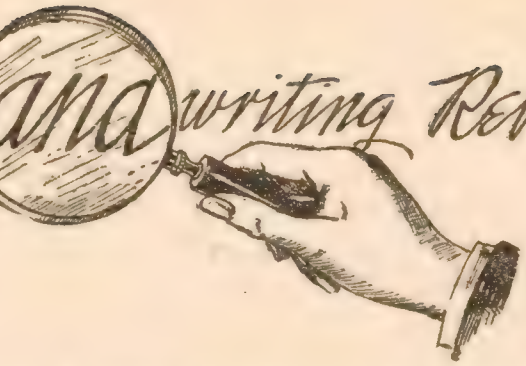
In the past Mrs. Jester was twice committed to Bellevue Hospital for observation, and both times she made her escape from this carefully guarded institution. Her commitment followed an all-night ride about the city, a ride she would neither explain nor pay for. Her recent operations were chiefly confined to the larger hotels and to railroad terminals.

Her plan was to meet an incoming train, pick out the likeliest-looking luggage or traveling bag, and then decamp with it. In the hotels she would pose as a guest, send an inquiring servant on a false errand, and then slip into the nearest room. In February, 1922, she was arrested for larceny, and when the charge was not pressed the magistrate freed her. At that time, she posed as a serving maid.

A curious combination of coincidence and clever detective work brought about her recent arrest. Detective Anthony Guinta of the Morrisania station was making a call on his friend, Sol Cohen, who owns a pawnshop on Third Avenue near Thirty-fourth Street. While the detective was in the shop, a well-dressed woman entered and offered Cohen a hand bag to pawn. The pawnbroker gave her $3, and she started to leave. At the door she paused and then returned, taking a diamond-studded lorgnette out of the folds of her coat. She asked for $25 dollars on it, and Cohen winked at the detective, for it was easily worth $600. After haggling a moment, he gave her the $25, and she departed, closely followed by the detective. When she entered a large and exclusive department store on Fifth Avenue, Guinta caught the eye of John F. Larkin, the head of the store's police organization.

Larkin "set a tail to her" and watched her as she slipped a pair of satin slippers worth $15, silk to the value of $20, and a jade bracelet, into the folds of her wrap. As she left the store she was arrested and taken to Larkin's office, where she was questioned for more than an hour. Eventually the officers discovered that she was representing herself as a public stenographer with an office on Garden Street, Hoboken, New Jersey. The detective went to her room with a van, and for some time seven men tramped up and down the stairs carrying out hundreds of objects which she had stolen in the previous three weeks.

What Handwriting Reveals



If you are an employer and desire to place your employees in the positions in your office or factory for which they are best fitted; or if you are just about to step out into the world to earn your own living; or if crimes involving handwriting have been committed in your community; or if you want to know the characters of your friends as revealed in their chirography—send Louise Rice, in care of this magazine, specimens of the handwriting of the persons concerned, and inclose a stamped, addressed envelope. She will analyze the samples submitted to her and will give you her expert opinion of them, free of charge.

All communications will be held in strict confidence. When permission is granted, cases will be discussed in the department, with or without the illustrations. Of course, under no circumstances will the identity of the persons concerned be revealed.

Every care will be taken to return specimens of handwriting, but it is to be understood that Miss Rice cannot be responsible for them.

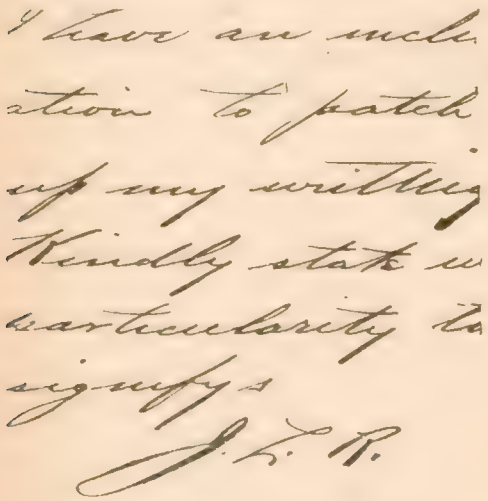
VIOLETTE.—I don't believe that any young girl need be "in despair" when she has a home and parents, as you say you have. The sad and terrible conditions of life which drive a girl to despair are not those of your sheltered life, Violette. Yes, I do agree that your mother is of a type which is not apt to understand a person of your disposition, and that your father is rather unloving. But he is a very just man, and your mother is a just woman, as well as a conscientious one. What is making you so unhappy is that passionate disposition of yours, which forces you to show such temper, resentfulness, and ill-advised scorn of the good folks who have taken care of you up to this time. No, I know that you didn't tell me you do that, but your handwriting told me, my dear. Many of us have known what it was to have some uncongenial conditions at home, but we know that this, like the conditions that will greet us in after life, are to be borne as well as possible and not taken with the tragic pose. Be sensible, dear girl. You will soon be of an age when you can take care of yourself, and then, if you feel as you now do, you can go out into the world, as so many young folks do, and live by yourself. Like many another, too, you will probably be glad to go back to the conditions that you now want to fly from.

ALFRED W., Providence.—The downward slope to your writing shows me that you are depressed and without the very positive and aggressive belief in yourself which is natural to a person of your temperament. I would suspect that you were living a sort of do-less life, without direct ambitions and steady work; and this, I know, is the worst possible thing for you—even worse than it would be for many another one. You are something of a sensualist, are selfish, and without much ideality of any kind; but your nature is an honest one. I would suggest that you look forward to being in business for yourself, as you will never be an especially amiable employee.

I. L.—Persons with your great gentleness and sensitiveness are badly handicapped in this rather crude and rude world, unless they learn to hide these qualities and to keep them only for the occasions when they may safely be uncovered. I would estimate you as needing to acquire this art of hiding some of yourself, and as not likely to have much of a happy or successful

life unless you filled the need. You are truthful to a hair, and honest; I was almost going to say too honest. I will amend that and say that you are too trustful.

J. L. R.—Your long slope, the speed at which you write, the grace of your letter formations, and the evenness of your line of writing—all show characteristics which—are in unity with one another, and that alone is something which is not often found.



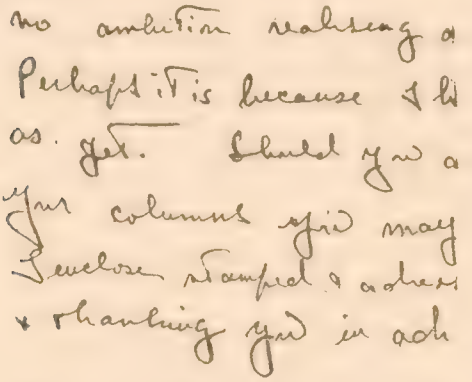
Your wide and even margins just add confirmation to it all—"all" indicating that yours is a nature to which the expression of a love of beauty and love of harmony are more than many of the things which others rate highly. I should say that you were not overly affectionate to individuals, but that your ardor had to do with appreciation of beauty, and with the capacity for expressing that in work. You are not highly original, but you will have facility of a rare sort in any line of art work that you undertake. Your personality is suave—a little too much so—and you are a respecter of persons, of place, and of social position.

KENDAL SECOND.—Friendship is a rare bird, as you say, and rarer still are they who succeed in putting salt on its tail! No, I don't mean to laugh at you, but I think that you will laugh at yourself if you stop to think of what you said to me. A boy of seventeen surely cannot have found "the world a hollow waste" and "all men liars." Tut—in fact, two tuts and a pish, Kendal. Your handwriting shows me that you are a gloomy and introspective youngster, but you have a fine mind, for all that; and I know you are perfectly capable of facing yourself and seeing what a goose you have been. You have talents and a trend of mind that ought to let you be successful in some branch of abstract science.

EFFIE C. H.—Yours is the problem which is more and more engaging the modern woman: Shall she sit at home, needing much that money could give, or, in your case, needing to put away something for a "rainy day," or shall she get out and hustle for what she wants or needs, and for what her husband does not—and sometimes will not—get? The fact that you and your husband are so congenial just adds the last touch of complexity to this situation. Personally, I think that the answer depends on the woman. If she is the kind of woman who is never happy outside her home, then she had better stay in it unless forced out by great need. But if she is the kind that you are, with a natural business instinct, with good judgment, and with a real love for some independence, no matter how much she cares for her husband, then I think that she needs much more than the "home life," and that her husband might as well make up his mind that that is the kind of woman she is! In your case, I should think that he would be proud of your pluck, and that he would try to help you to go forward; but the man who will do such a thing is so rare that even I, with hundreds of letters from men arriving every day or so, have seldom found him. If I were

you, I would go forward to real business success and to real—and separate and individual—activity.

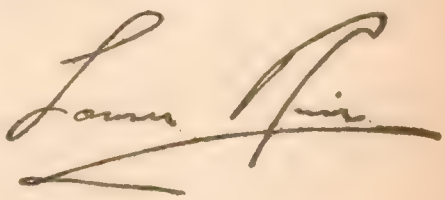
O. G. M.—That trouble you have in not being ambitious just means that you are not congenially placed. Are you trying to do mechanical work? Well, you are not fitted for it at all. On the other hand, you have the mind that would lean toward some one of the sciences, but—and it a big but—you not only lack the education for this, but even the habit of close application. If you can tune yourself to this last, you can gain the education, though I grant you that you will have some difficulty in getting into the swing of it, as it were.



Make up your mind to one thing, anyway, and that is that you will never, never be satisfied with life or yourself unless you really climb, and climb high, in some scientific pursuit. I am perfectly sure of this and hope that you will take what I say as seriously as it is said.

COLON.—The specimen numbered one is the writing of an affectionate and sweet-tempered girl, very kind, very honest, and very free of vanity, but not, alas, very interesting. 'Tis often the way in this most contrary world that the most exemplary characters seem to lack salt, as 'twere. Two has a nature a great deal like your own—fond of pleasure and fond of action, sincere and friendly, but not of the type to live for others, as would number one. Three is the writing of a queer nature, in which the affections, pride, selfishness, generosity, bad temper, and warm-heartedness are all so mixed up that it is hard to sort out what is good and what is bad. The will power is used in a vacillating manner, and yet it is innately strong. This person I suspect to be a girl and to be leading an idle, or at least not sufficiently active, life for one of so much vitality and of so intense a nature.

J. R. C.—Yes, I think that you will do well to remain a salesman. You have the natural interest in people which is needed for such work, and you have some faint understanding of the thoughtful attention to detail which you will need if you are to be really successful. On the other hand, you are very disorderly, not only in small things, but in large, and you have a variable temper; also, you have a mind that is apt to go off on a side track too frequently. You said that I was not to fear hurting your feelings. Well, I am sure that severe criticism of this kind will do so, nevertheless, because you are very sensitive. That is something you will have to control—in fact, I will say for you that you do try to do so now. Men of your type are fond of home, but are hard to suit in the way of a mate, so I hope that, if you are unmarried, you will see to it that you find a girl who is a creature of love and laughter—the only type which could really hold you.



Any one interested in any phase of finger printing will receive advice from Mr. Call and his associates, upon a statement of their needs. Experts, in doubt as to the details of a case on which they are engaged, will be given prompt and careful attention.

All communications requiring a reply must be accompanied by a stamped, addressed envelope. Mr. Call particularly invites letters and inquiries which may be published in this department.

A Great Man Passes

DOCTOR JACQUES BERTILLON has passed on from this world, in which he bore so large a part for so long. Finger-print students, knowing so well how infallible is the system by which they work, are apt to underrate the place that this great Frenchman and his brother and his father will hold in the history of the investigation and the elimination of crime.

When Doctor Alphonse Bertillon, father of Jacques, first brought forward his statement that the bodily measurements of each individual were totally dissimilar, he was laughed at and was called a charletan and a fake; even the Paris police, that astute and formidable body, made the mistake of laughing at Bertillon. He had many hardships, and he had almost universal scorn and a great deal of financial difficulty, but slowly he won his way upward.

The fact that the Bertillon system was not as infallible as was at first claimed, has nothing to do with Jacques Bertillon's position in the line of the world's geniuses; the fact remains that his father was the first man to start the investigation of the possibility of personal identification, and he was largely responsible for the perfecting of that system as it's used to-day. After the Paris police accepted the system, and after Jacques and his work became known the wide world over, there was more and more confidence felt in this possibility of really identifying a human being. All sorts of scientific lines of identification received an impetus from the success of the Bertillon system. Identification by photograph re-

ceived more attention. Identification by minor oddities of the human frame was studied, such, for instance, as the very distinct individualization of the ear. Writers of detective fiction, who have done a great deal more for the broadcasting of interest in personal identification and crime removal than they ever get the credit for, began to use their inventive faculties along these new lines.

The Bertillon system, as one might say, is the father of all the modern detective methods of identification. Before it appeared, identification was largely a sort of hit-or-miss business, in which a single detective might be a wonder, but could do little to pass on his ideas or his methods, since they were intuitional and not scientific.

Compared with the system of finger printing, the Bertillon system of personal identification is clumsy and inaccurate; it has instruments, some of them heavy, which require great skill to use, and the results of which use are greatly affected by the idiosyncrasies of the individual operator; and the searching of the records is something that only a semigenius can perform. The searching of a finger-print record, on the contrary, is something which any bright student can do, as well as the oldest operative. Granting all this, however, we must give honor where honor is due. Doctor Bertillon was a far-sighed scientist, who at least had a vision of the real way in which personal identification would ultimately be approached. Those who break the way, those who open the road through the jungle of ignorance, for any science, deserve a high place in our memories.

In all the success that some of us have gained through the finger-print profession, I suppose that there would not be one in a hundred who would have in his or her possession a photograph of Sir William J. Herschel, the parent of the science which they now profess, or of Sir E. R. Henry, who perfected that which Sir William began. It would not be a matter of foolish sentiment for us to hold these men in honor. Dentists and physicians usually have the engravings of the great men of their professions in their offices, and I here and now propose that we of the finger-print profession see to it that we have such engravings of Sir William and Sir Henry for our offices, and that with them we place the great Frenchman, Bertillon, who, while he was not a finger-print expert, was the forerunner of those who were.

Sir Francis Galton, who was one of the British Committee, in 1894, which recommended the use of the finger-print system to the British government, ought also to be a person honored by the finger-print profession; so, too, might be Mr. Asquith, the famous English politician, who was also on this committee.

Modern detective methods are doing away with the old "third degree" with the stern and terrorizing *questionaire*, with the presumption that every one who happened to be near the scene of a crime might be a participant in it. More and more, every man is presumed to be innocent until he is proven guilty. And nothing will help this so much as the use of the universal finger-print system, which will make it impossible for a man or a woman to be falsely accused.

These early investigators, Bertillon, Galton, Henry, Herschel, little knew what a magnificent moral edifice they were building when they pursued their quiet and often poverty-strewn ways. Let us, who profit by what they suffered, not forget them.

ANSWERS TO READERS' QUERIES

MESMER.—I do not believe that hypnotism should be used on another, under any circumstances whatever, except by a physician, and one who is thor-

oughly familiar with the action of this very peculiar power. As for an ordinary person dabbling in such a matter, I consider it exceedingly dangerous and would earnestly advise you to let it severely alone. Of my own personal knowledge, I can tell of something that happened in St Louis some years ago that should frighten away any young person who is trying to deal with this strange force. A young student of a medical college there thought that he had hypnotic powers and used, for a subject, a young lady of his acquaintance. In one of the trances into which he threw her, she died. He was charged with murder and was acquitted, on the plea that the young lady had voluntarily submitted to his manipulations; but the event clouded his life and brought great sorrow to the family of the young girl, as well as to the fine young fellow to whom she was engaged, and who was a chum of mine. Take warning, Mesmer, and let things of this sort alone.

As for the use of such power in dealing with criminals, I seriously doubt whether it would work. Those who are subject to hypnotic influences are, as a rule, the young and the innocent, or the pure and the unworldly. I have seen one of the most accomplished hypnotists of this country try to put a well-known criminal under the influence, while that hardened individual sat and grinned; the professional man eventually fainted. I do not believe that this method can be used with criminals, and this experience of mine is not a singular one. Many and many an investigator has come to the same conclusion. No man or woman may refuse to have their finger prints taken without directing the suspicion of the law to them, so that, if a detective with a legitimate cause for asking for the action were refused, he could well call in an officer and conduct the kind of searching investigation that would lead to the identification of the person with whom he was dealing. You are to note, too, that the finger-print expert generally does not have to take any impressions unless he is backed in this by the police. Don't get the idea into your head that the F. P. E. is obliged to work without the support of the authorities. You may take photographs of finger prints, if you choose, and get access to the scene of a crime, even though the police are not coöperating with you; but to take the finger prints of citizens, you have to have some authority. The idea that you could "mesmerize" people and take their prints without their conscious knowledge is fantastic and impossible. If you really have some of the ability to hypnotize, go to a reputable physician and get him to show you how to use it with discretion and care.

LETTER ELEVEN YEARS IN MAILS IS RETURNED

THERE was returned recently to the Pinoleum Company, of No. 408 West Thirteenth Street, New York City, a letter which they had mailed on December 30, 1911, to Mrs. A. Bollton, a trained nurse of Adrian, North Dakota. The letter had been in the mails eleven years, lacking two months and three days. The postmark, which was still discernible, showed that the letter had been mailed from Station C of the New York post office. Although the address was written plainly, the stamp marks on the envelope showed that in 1912 half a dozen attempts were made to find Mrs. Bollton in Arena, North Dakota, instead of Adrian. No explanation could be learned as to why the post office had taken almost eleven years to return the letter to the sender.

The How, When, and Where of Success

Conducted by RUTHERFORD SCOTT

If it is impossible for you to wait for Mr. Scott to touch upon the work in which you are especially interested, in one of his articles, send a stamped, addressed envelope, and a careful, accurate, and brief statement of what your education is, what your experience has been, and where you wish to begin your career; also, the amount of time and money which you can give to your apprenticeship. He will write you a personal letter, and tell you what you wish to know.

The Advertisement Writer

WHILE it is true that some authors have succeeded in writing the wording of advertisements, many a man and woman has succeeded in getting high prices for advertisements, who could not have written one page of material acceptable to a discriminating editor. For instance, the advertisement writer who gets a great deal of money invents the so-called slogans with which the advertising world is replete, but for which it is always on the alert. The man who has evolved such a slogan may not have been able to write a well-constructed letter, but he has the constructive sense and the "mind with a punch" which you will always hear mentioned among those who are in this line of work.

On the other hand, some of the advertising matter is produced by authors who turn to this for an addition to their incomes. Some of the food advertisements, for instance, are written by women who write a great deal, in their private capacities, for the household magazines. Those who want to break into the game—as the expression is—however, need not have either the kind of minds nor the degree of literary education that these literary-commercial people have, but they must have the mental slant. By that I mean that they must understand the psychology of the written word as applied to the public in advertising. I will try to give a few examples of this, that will show the essential thing.

Let us say that it is a food product to be advertised. There are three ways in which the wording of advertisements can appear. We can be severely businesslike: "Medson's vegetables, three sizes, all kinds. Note the brand. Ask for Melson's." This was about the only kind of advertising used fifty years ago, and that is still the favorite of the mass of English advertisers. After this, there came the period of the very technical: "Melson's products are guaranteed by the government chemists to be free from all injurious matter," or, "Melson's products are put up by trained scientists. Nothing hit-or-miss about their methods. Eat Melson's and be safe." Then came the intimate period, which we are still in. Now we talk to the public "me-to-you" fashion, and the closer we can get, the more we can make it sound as if two friends were chatting, the more successful we are: "Let me tell you my experience in using Melson's in my own kitchen," begins the new style of food advertising. As part of the intimate style, there are the clever verse, the amusing picture, the beautiful picture that also tells a story, the "catch-word," the slogan, and the good title.

Any one who will diligently read the advertisements in the magazines for a month or so will be able to identify these various methods. The magazines, in fact, are the technical schools of the advertisement writer. No better way of learning could be devised than for a student to cut out advertisements, paste them in a scrapbook, and then sit down to analyze them and eventually to try to do better ones, or some as good.

At first it will appear almost too easy, but not after some effort has been made. Begin by making a list of things that have well-known catchwords, and you will be on the way to realize the peculiar talent which has made the ad-

vertising word one of the greatest powers in the United States. It takes a long time for the advertisement writer to become really at home with the work, so that his or her mind reacts automatically to advertising needs; but, once the beginning is made by a person who has the instinct, self-development will be direct and continuous.

Positions with the advertising force of any product, or with such firms as write advertisements for different firms, may be secured by showing that the applicant has some talent for the work and some understanding of it. A good way to make the application is to do a few model advertisements, or to suggest something that will better an advertisement in use. A woman of my acquaintance recently got work from a very big advertising firm by writing a letter to the president, showing that an adertisement then appearing was at fault. It was an advertisement of flour and was designed for appearance near a certain national holiday. The quotations as to that holiday were inaccurate. A statement in the advertisement, as to old customs observed on the holiday, was pure myth; there were three grammatical errors; and the phrasing of the last sentence was bad. The applicant for a a position rewrote the advertisement and secured what she was looking for. I do not say that this would always bring a position, but in the course of time, if the applicant is persistent, and if the suggested advertisements or corrected advertisements were worthy of attention, it surely will.

There are also courses in correspondence schools to be secured along these lines; a course in journalism would do a great deal to help; but self-training is, after all, the essential thing.

The advertisements of at least half the advertising world—the national advertisers—is "handled" by advertising firms, meaning that a firm will employ several "copy" writers and artists, who will then think up new ideas and new stunts for advertising and sell those ideas to such firms as will pay for them—writing the words, making whatever picture or lettering is necessary, arranging the whole, and often "placing" it as well; that is, seeing that the printing is arranged for. Such firms are the best places for the ambitious advertisement writer to begin.

In dealing with such firms, however, the thing to do is to go direct, in person, taking copies of any work that has been done, or samples of studies. The salary for such a beginner would be small; or it might be that there would be no opportunity for a weekly wage, but that there would be occasional "jobs" at which the applicant would be given a trial, to be paid if the work hit the mark.

A good way to break into this work is for the would-be advertisement writer to get in touch with some printer who makes a specialty of "folders" and of the blotting pads that are used by many firms as advertisements, and other things of a similar nature. The printer can make a small charge for having the "copy" of his customer edited or written, and sometimes the printer will pay himself to have this done, for the sake of the advertising that such a free service will give him. No better training could be had for the future than a year of such work, which could easily be done while other, steadier, work was kept waiting the time when a position with an advertising firm could be secured.

To begin with, the salary offered might be very small indeed; and to begin with, it should not be refused, no matter what it is. This is not an easy line of work to get into. The important thing is to get a start. After that, with a few months of experience, and with the ease that personal contact with people in the business will give, the salary

can become a matter of settlement. In this respect, the advertising business is the same as that of the theater; it is full of special expressions, catchwords, technical terms, has a whole atmosphere of its own, which cannot fail to be strange to a newcomer, and the effect of which is to put him or her very ill at ease, out of all proportion to its actual importance. Therefore, the first year is the most trying one, as well as the one most difficult to get. Beyond that, it is wholly a matter of personal success.

The free lance has an office of his own, and sometimes an assistant, and does special "jobs" for the advertising firms or direct for the firms using advertisements. A man or woman who has gone so far as that is a success. There is one woman in New York who has a house and a number of assistants, and all she does is give advice on advertising that has to do with things of interest to women. She is reputed to be wealthy. Needless to say, she was an expert writer of advertisements before she become this court of final appeal.

There are various lines in which the advertisement writer can work, indirect, and yet moving toward his real work. He can proof-read; he can work with a printer, as before said; he can advertise in the daily papers to edit the printed matter of business firms, thus getting at them without the agency of the printer; he can write slogans and advertising matter, free of charge, for any patriotic or municipal project, thus bringing himself to the attention of the business men of the community—a connection out of which other work will be sure to come. Very often he can sell occasional articles to the newspapers. In all ways he can be looking to enlarge his grip on the advertising slant of the world.

I consider that this career is a most promising one. I would recommend it heartily for any man or woman with the talent for it; and the fact that there is a real desire for such work is a pretty accurate indication that there is the talent. As I have said, it is not a business which will pay well for the first year or two, but, as advertising is ever on the increase, and as the clever copy-writer is far less in numbers, in proportion, than the commercial art man, who is his business twin, I am sure that his prospects would be better. If real success is attained, the monetary rewards are greater than for many of the professions and at a far smaller cost of hard work.

COUNTERFEITER REQUESTS TERM IN ATLANTA PENITENTIARY

WHEN Joseph Brill, sixty-five years old, was brought before United States Judge Wilkerson, in Chicago, charged with making spurious silver dollars and five-dollar gold pieces, he asked that the judge, in passing sentence, commit him to the Atlanta Penitentiary. "I'm guilty, judge," Brill began, "but I have written a letter for you. That will tell you better than I can testify. You see, judge, I'm getting very old, very old. In my young days I was something of an artist. I got a hankering for making counterfeit coins. I can't keep away from them. Been in prison off and on for some thirty-three years. I was never in Atlanta Prison, so if you are going to jail me, please send me there." Judge Wilkerson granted the gray-haired man's request and sentenced him to the Atlanta Prison for six years.

UNDER THE LAMP

CONDUCTED BY HENRY A. KELLER

The Amateur's Cipher

THE sample of secret writing which I have selected to keep you under the lamp this week was taken from the experience of the late Inspector Steele. His marginal notes, those that accompany each sample of cryptography writing, in this case draw attention to several unique features in the case history, as well as in the cipher. The heart appeal brought to light, that of a struggle of two souls who had transgressed and were trying to live down their false step, is of particular note, said the inspector, and those who have had the privilege of examining his voluminous scrap book are of the same opinion. Attend:

Tony Morrell at twenty-five had the unenviable record of being an ex-convict. Burglary was his crime; in his very early youth, companions of the wrong sort led him to take part in a house entry, and he was caught and sent to prison. When he came out, his one aim was to make for himself a place in society of which he could be proud. His guiding motive was the usual one—a girl.

Anita Andrews, the pretty, young thing who had the courage to cast her lot in with Tony's and promised to marry him, was herself the bearer of a prison record. Shoplifting was her charge, and for the very forceful reason that her father, a confirmed drunkard, beat her every evening she came home without something of value sufficient to buy him the necessary inebriation.

When Anita's term was up, she was taken into the home of a genuinely philanthropic woman, a woman of wealth whose interests in life were welfare work and prison reform along intelligent lines. She gave Anita a chance to build herself up by making her a maid in her home, where she could work, free from the fear of being forced to tell her story. Naturally, Anita was happy, for she counted her job as a Heaven-sent aid to an early marriage and a happy life. She talked about her job. Her friends, in time, got to know her duties, who worked with her, and something of the layout of the house. This seemingly harmless, chatty talk of a carefree girl got around to ears for which it was not intended—specifically, a lookout for a burglar gang, who passed the word along to his chief that a promising lay was the home of Anita's employer. The chief investigated, found the ground favorable, and a job was planned.

Fortunately for Tony, a friend who was indeed a friend, learned of the proposed burglary. He saw in the affair not only a mere robbery of the house's valuables, but an insidious plot to destroy that for which Tony and his sweetheart were working, that which they cherished above all else. This friend undertook to let Tony know of the plot. But, as the friend was in danger of losing his standing in the underworld "profession" which he represented, and as he ran the danger of losing even his life did it become known that he had betrayed his burglar gang, he wrote his message to Tony in cipher, after a plan which he devised to suit the occasion.

Now Tony had never had experience with ciphers. His knowledge of them was what the average man knows of the history of China in the eighth century, or the folk songs of Finland. But, as he was on friendly terms with several kindly disposed men at headquartres who knew his story and were in

sympathy with his fight to come back, he took the cipher to Inspector Steele, chief among his well-wishers. The inspector solved the cipher, of course, with the consequence that the burglar band was caught red-handed. But, had he not been able to work out the cipher, the outcome would have been more than disastrous for Tony and Anita.

As the inspector says, the cipher represents an important human document. You will enjoy every minute you spend on it. The plan of its construction? You really would not forgive me if I spoiled it for you. Sufficient to say that it is an amateur's work, and that the inspector solved it in eight minutes. It will be answered in next week's issue.

LseifitsygCoonrnaictlaesapnlAanceyI phmuarnsddfararmaenhienrsfiodehjooi bsOwnieswe

The solution to last week's cipher is: "Take five steps from chestnut tree to south. Dig four feet. Find tin box containing my savings. Good luck." The "Eight kings threaten to save five nice ladies from one sick knave," being interpreted, means the 8, King, 3, 10, 2, 7, 5, 9, Queen, 4, 1, 6, Jack, of card suits. There are thirteen of them, and twenty-six letters of the alphabet, so that a division of the alphabet into two equal parts is suggested. "Question above, and below" means that one of these divisions is identified with a question mark, the other with an "and-sign." "Equals every word" means that an "equal-sign" indicates word-endings. Now then, here's the way the division was made, and how the signs were applied:

8	K	3	10	2	7	5	9	Q	4	1	6	J
?	A	C	E	G	I	K	M	O	Q	S	U	W	Y
&	B	D	F	H	J	L	N	P	R	T	V	X	Z

The rest explains itself, except that for every letter of the answer, there was in the cipher a sign and a figure, or a sign and a letter. Mr. Kiat did a splendid one, eh?

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE:

THE G STRING

Few men are equal to all the exigencies of successful murder. Even the cleverest forget "a power not ourselves" usually controls the G string.

By JOHN JAY CHICHESTER

THUBWAY THAM'TH HONETHT HUNDRED

Wherein Thubway Tham sets out to get an honest hundred.

By JOHNSTON McCULLEY

AN HONORABLE CRIME

It sounds like a contradiction, but Scott Campbell will iron the wrinkle out to your entire satisfaction.

By SCOTT CAMPBELL

AND OTHER STORIES ORDER YOUR COPY IN ADVANCE

MISSING

This department conducted in duplicate in DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE and WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, thus giving readers double service, is offered free of charge to our readers. Its purpose is to aid them in getting in touch with persons of whom they have lost track.

While it will be better to use your name in the notice, we will print your request "blind" if you prefer. In sending "blind" notices, you must, of course, give us your right name and address, so that we can forward promptly any letters that may come for you. We reserve the right to reject any notice that seems to us unsuitable.

If it can be avoided, please do not send us a "General Delivery" post-office address, for experience has proved that those persons who are not specific as to address often have mail that we send them returned to us marked "not found." It would be well, also, to notify us of any change in your address.

Now, readers, help those whose friends or relatives are missing, as you would like to be helped if you were in a similar position.

WARNING.—Do not forward money to any one who sends you a letter or telegram, asking for money "to get home," et cetera, until you are absolutely certain that the author of such telegram or letter is the person you are seeking.

FOSTER, CHARLOTTE M.—She was last heard of in San Francisco in 1919. She is asked to write to Albert E. Stevens, Box 917, Athens, Georgia.

CHADBOURNE, CHARLES.—He is seventeen years old and has been missing since July 25, 1922. He was last heard of at Mansfield, Ohio, on October 12th. He is five feet eight and a half inches tall, weighs about one hundred and thirty pounds, has dark hair sprinkled with gray, and hazel eyes, with a slight droop of the left eyelid. He is asked to come home and finish his schooling, and to write to his mother, who is worrying about him. C. E. Chadbourne, 2813 California Avenue, Kenmore, Ohio.

FEGAN, BERNARD J.—He left his home at Doylesburg, Pennsylvania, and has not been heard of for twenty-two years. His father is dead, and the home is broken up. Any information concerning him will be gratefully appreciated by his sister, Mrs. Charles Andrews, R. R. 3, Huron, South Dakota.

BRUETTE, MARIE, who was last seen in Willow River, Minnesota, in September, 1922, is asked to write to an old friend, Carl Johnson, 115 Second Street, S. E. Minneapolis, Minnesota.

REED, JOHN F. and **GERTRUDE,** who were last heard of around Le Mars and Lorimor, Iowa, about sixteen years ago. Their son would like to hear from them or from any one who can give him information about them. Glen R. Lytle, Box 471, Nashua, Iowa.

FISHER, ALEC.—He and his sister, or brother, were put in the Glen Home at Terre Haute in 1913. The other one was adopted the same year. Any information about Alec will be gladly received by L. M., Box 152, Montezuma, Indiana.

DAVIS, WILLIAM W.—He was last heard of at Ardmore, Oklahoma, thirty-four years ago. He has one leg shorter than the other. His brother and sister would like to hear from him or from any one who can give them news of his whereabouts. Jim Davis, Box 83, Shreveport, Louisiana.

BADEKER, MILDRED, whose home was in Sparta, Illinois, and who was last heard from in St. Louis, Missouri. Later it was heard that she had gone to Norfolk, Virginia. There is very important news for her and any one who can give information as to her whereabouts will do a favor by writing to I. H. E., care of this magazine.

COULTER, WILLIE, who was last heard of in Detroit, Michigan, is asked to write to his brother, who will greatly appreciate any helpful information as to his whereabouts. John W. Coulter, care of this magazine.

BRITTON, JOB.—Please write to your old pal who was in Little Rock last summer, at T——, the home address. D. H. T.

SMITH, GARRETT, JR., known to his friends as "Little Smithy." He is about twenty-six years old, five feet seven inches tall, with light-brown hair and blue eyes. He was last heard of in December, 1920, and it is thought that he may have gone to some place on the Mexican border with the intention of running a motor truck line. An old pal has news for him, and will be glad to hear from him, or from any one who knows his whereabouts. F. White, care of this magazine.

BAKER, F. G., his wife, and their children, Isabelle and Russell. They have been missing since June 1, 1920, and were last heard of in Jackson, Michigan. All trace of them has now been lost, and their son Donald is anxiously seeking them. Any one who knows where they are will do a great kindness by writing to him, as he is distracted with grief at their absence. Donald Baker, care of this magazine.

KLEINHUNTZ, MISS V.—Any one who knows her address will do a favor by writing to O. M., care of this magazine.

HAVNER, ANDY.—Please communicate with your niece, Mrs. P. Havner Mosher, at 116 North Grand Street, Lansing, Michigan, or with your sister-in-law, Mrs. Rosa Havner, at 977 Stimson Street, Detroit, Michigan. This man was last heard of in Cincinnati, Ohio, twenty years ago.

HENSLEY, ELMER.—Please send your address to M., care of this magazine.

EISENBARTH, JOHN.—Please write to mother as she is very anxious about you, and would be happy to hear from you.

SMITH, ROBERT ISAAC, born August 2, 1890, **MARY ELIZABETH,** born January 6, 1892 or 1893. They were put in the Chicago Orphan Home with their half-brother, Malcolom Taylor, on October 17, 1895. Malcolm was adopted by a great-aunt. Robert has dark-brown curly hair and brown eyes. Elizabeth has light-brown curly hair and pansy-blue eyes. It is thought that Robert may remember his older sisters, Goldie and Pearl, and his Aunt Mary. Any one who knows their whereabouts, or who can give any news of them, will do a great favor by writing to their sister, Mrs. Goldie Gilmore, 2342 Gladys Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

BROWNE, JOHN D.—Your sister is very anxious to hear from you and begs you to write and send her your address. Jean.

JOHANSEN, PAUL.—Write to your brother George. Good news for you. Margaret.

SYNU, JOHN.—You are asked to write to your sister as soon as possible. If you do not wish your address known it will be kept secret. There is very important news for you. This young man is tall, wears glasses, has blue eyes and light hair. Any one who knows him will do a great favor by writing to Mrs. C. H. Lawton, 102 Charlesbank Road, Newton, Massachusetts.

HURSH, CHARLES, sometimes known as Charles Williams. He was born in Ridgeland, or Brighton, New York, is about five feet seven inches tall, of light complexion and wears glasses. He was last seen in Rochester, New York. His brother would be very happy to hear from him and hopes he will see this, or be told that he is seeking him, and write. Filmore George Hursh, care of this magazine.

MOOREHOUSE, CORPORAL HAROLD A.—He was in Company F, One Hundred and Forty-eighth Infantry, was wounded at Olsene, Belgium, in the back of left arm and upper right arm, also on the left side of his head, causing amnesia. He left Camp Sherman in April, 1919. He was five feet seven inches tall, weighed one hundred and forty pounds, with fair, wavy hair and gray eyes. There is a small mole under his chin, and the eye tooth on left side is crooked. He does not know his real name and thinks the Red Cross wishes to detain him. Any one acquainted with a young man of this description will do a great favor by writing to his father, H. S. Moorehouse, 2481 Arlington Road, Cleveland, Ohio.

KANE, HENRY FREDERICK.—He left his home in search of work on September 18, 1921, saying he was going to Stockton, California, and no word has been received from him since. He went with a Fred Johnson in a Ford touring car. He is about six feet tall, with brown eyes and hair, rather husky and has two tattoo marks on each arm. He was discharged from the army in June, 1920. His wife is left with two young babies and her health is not good. She will be grateful for any information that will help her to know where he is. Mrs. H. F. Kane, 500 Prevost Street, San Jose, California.

BENEIAN, MEGUERTITCH.—He is an artist and was in the United States eleven or twelve years ago. He came from the province of Van, Armenia. His brother is anxiously seeking him, and will be grateful to any one who can give him news of him. Abraham Beneian, care of this magazine.

LUCAS, GLADYS.—Please send your address to this magazine. Letters sent to your address in Vancouver have been returned.

J. C. S.—Return at once. Your father has settled all debts and we need you to continue the business. We love you and want you to start in again. Write at once. L. S.

JOSIE.—Please write. James is sick. All is forgiven. Jim.

FOWLER, JEWEL, who used to live near Boswell, Oklahoma, is asked to write to an old friend, who is very anxious to hear from her. Newton Bowers, Box 575, Shamrock, Oklahoma.

PAULIE.—Please wrtie and let us know where you are. If you come go to daddy or Earl at the mill. If you write to Sky Sky, will get it. Please let us hear from you, Mama. E. J. W.

CHARLIE.—Write to mother and hear something about home. Murray Mack.

BOB.—You should write to Ed. at once at 1134. Important. No hard feelings.

CAMPBELL, WILEY C.—He formerly worked in Wichita, Kansas, and Pueblo, Colorado, was discharged from the service at Camp Lee shortly after the armistice, and was last heard from in Phoenix, Arizona. He is a machinist, thirty years old, about five feet ten inches tall, weighs about one hundred and fifty pounds, has a small raised spot on his forehead, and the little finger of his left hand is slightly curved. Any one who can furnish information that will help to find this man will confer a great favor upon his anxious parents, and will earn their deepest gratitude. Thomas J. Campbell, R. D. 34, Box 238-E, Barberton, Ohio.

NOTICE.—An old friend wishes to learn the whereabouts of his pal, who served in the First Field Artillery at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, was transferred to, and discharged from the Sixteenth Field Artillery at Bath, Maine, about December, 1920. He is asked to write to his old pal, Henry J. Mostykonski, care of this magazine.

CROWE, W. G.—He is sixty-nine years old, with dark hair, light complexion, and brown eyes, and is six feet three and a half inches tall. His son has not seen him since he went to the war nearly six years ago, and would be very grateful for information as to his whereabouts. He also has a brother, Homer Crowe, who is in the army, but he does not know where. He hopes he will see this and write to him, as he is all alone in the world. William H. Crowe, care of this magazine.

HOLDEN, HARRY J.—He is asked to write to his mother and give her an address to which she can write. All her letters to him have been returned and she is very anxious to write to her boy. Mother.

PIKE, ROBERT JAMES.—He was last heard from in 1888, at Brockton, Massachusetts, also his niece, **ETTA BRITTON,** who was last heard from in Portland, Maine. Their brother and uncle would like to hear from them. Henry S. Pike, 829 Central Avenue, Los Angeles, California.

DUNNINGTON, JOHN S. and **HARRY.**—Any one who knows their whereabouts will do a great favor by writing to Max T. Dunnington, care of this magazine.

WOLFE, ALEX.—Please come home. The baby and I need you. Or at least let me hear of you through Bill. Your loving wife, Mary.

ALBERT.—I feel a little better now. I have Chester. Hope to hear from you soon. Ma.

TOMMY.—Please write to me at the same address. I want to see you soon, and hope you will write without delay. Your old pal, Vivian J.

KRONBERG, ALBERT.—When last heard from he was on board the U. S. S. "Ingraham," at Pearl Harbor, H. T. He is about twenty-two years old, five feet seven inches tall, with blue eyes and light hair. An old friend, who has not heard from him for a year, would be glad to get news of him, and will greatly appreciate any information as to his present address. San Diego, care of this magazine.

BELL, OLIVER A.—He was last heard from in Camp Mills, Long Island, New York, at Base Hospital 20, in May, 1919. His two sisters and his brother are very anxious to get news of him, and will be deeply grateful for any helpful information. Please write to Mrs. E. N. Albea, care of this magazine.

STIGLER, MISS BOBBIE, who was last heard of in Tulsa, Oklahoma, is asked to write without delay to Paul E. Vann, who has important news for her, at 1622 Railroad Avenue, Mingus, Texas.

SUTTON, MRS. JULIE.—She was the wife of Jim Sutton, who took her two children, Dovie and Oscar, from Texarkana, some years ago, while their mother was away, and has not been seen since. It was heard later that he had given the children to an Indian in Oklahoma, but nothing was found out about this. Mrs. Sutton's relatives are seeking her, as she never came back, and thought that her people were angry at her. They have hunted everywhere for her without success, and hope to hear from her through this notice. Any one who can give news of her, or of her children, will do a great favor by writing to her niece Mary. Mrs. C. C. Johnson, care of this magazine.

STEDMAN, H. H. (GENE).—He was last heard of in Seattle, Washington, about four years ago. Any information as to his present address will be gratefully received by Agnes, care of this magazine.

JOHNSON, HAZEL AGATHA.—She was born in Smithfield, Fulton County, Illinois, and went to Lake City, Florida, in 1903 or 1904, to live with her grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Reuben R. Lissenby, who had moved from Canton, Illinois. The child was then seven years old, and is now about twenty-six. Any information that would help to find her would be gratefully appreciated by her father, George Oscar Johnson, 2802-A, Franklin Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri.

CULVER, LAWRENCE, and **HUGO NARVA,** last heard from in San Francisco, are asked to write to M. Culver, giving return address. Box 582, Chisholm, Minnesota.

DALE, WILLIAM J.—He was last heard from in New York City in April, 1922. He is about five feet four inches in height, with dark hair and light complexion. He is asked to write at once to Mrs. Mary B. Wolcott, 3264 Chandler Street, West Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

PUTHOFF, LUCILLE, who formerly lived in Joliet, Illinois, and has not been heard from since April, 1921. A friend is very anxious to find her and will appreciate any information as to her present address. It is hoped that she will see this and write to W. J. W., care of this magazine.

PURVIS, THOMAS GORDON, is asked to write to his old friend at the home address. S. H.

GRAHAM, ROLAND HENRY.—He left home in November, 1919. Any one who knows where he is will do a great favor by writing to his sister, Mrs. V. H. Logsdon, 403 East Forty-first Street, Los Angeles, California.

RUTKOWSKI, PAUL.—Please come back home. Father and the family want you back. F. Rutkowski.

BEEZLEY, BERT E.—He was in Duck Water, Nevada, in 1916, when last heard of. Information as to his present address will be appreciated by J. F. Beezley, Thompson Falls, Montana.

SORENSON, LEWIS.—He was last heard from in Seattle in 1906, when he was accountant for the Great Northern Railway Co. His home was formerly in Minneapolis. His daughter would like very much to hear from him, as she has not seen him since she was three years old. Mrs. Vera Galer, care of this magazine.

W. L. R.—Am worried about you. Folks going through lawsuit. If any work where you are let me know. Will come. T. Messer.

TAYLOR, BOB.—He was last seen in Camp Travis. He was a member of Company G, Ninth Infantry, Second Division. His buddy, Jim Arter, would like to hear from him in care of this magazine.

HARTMAN, HELEN E.—She was placed in a home for orphans about 1903, and was taken out by some people who lived in Chicago at that time. She is asked to write to her brother, who has lost all trace of her, and who is very anxious to find her. He will appreciate any information that will help to find her. Corporal Charles C. Hartman, care of this magazine.

BAKER, HALLARD.—He is five feet six inches tall, with light-brown hair and blue eyes, and was last heard from in Colorado in 1920. His mother is worrying about him, and will greatly appreciate any information that will help her to communicate with her son. Mrs. Ellen Baker, care of this magazine.

POLZ, AGNES.—She was last heard of in Far Rockaway, Long Island, in 1910. Any one who knows her whereabouts, or who can give any news of her, will do a great favor by writing to P. O. Box 514, Haines, Alaska.

J. J. J.—Please write to your wife. She must have an understanding. She is the same as ever. Mrs. J. J. J.

PAYNE, GEORGE MURPHY.—He is about sixty years old, six feet two inches tall, with fair hair and blue eyes, and was in Denver, Colorado, about eleven years ago. Any one who can give information as to his present address will do a kindness by communicating with Denver, care of this magazine.

MOCHTYACK, GEORGE.—He was discharged in August, 1921, from Camp Travis, Texas, where he served eight months in the army. He is about twenty-three years old, six feet tall, with brown hair and light complexion. He was last heard of in Clarksburg, West Virginia. Any information regarding his whereabouts would be gladly welcomed by his cousin, Miss Mary Wodhonel, Ellsworth Station, Ohio.

STEPHENSON, FRED and **FLORENCE.**—They were last heard of in 1910, when they were put in homes somewhere in Chicago. Their adopted names are not known. Their brother would be very happy if he could find them, and will greatly appreciate any information concerning them. Charley Stephenson, care of this magazine.

RYAN, FRANK WALKER.—Your mother has given you up as dead and grieves for you. Please write to us, as we have not heard since you left Beaumont. If there is any trouble let us know. Mother is now with us. Write to me in care of this magazine. Your brother James.

ODEN, MRS. BERT (JENNIE).—She was last heard of in Portland, Oregon, where she was employed as a waitress. She left there for San Francisco with her husband last June. Her friend would be very pleased to hear from her and hopes she will see this and write to Alice, care of this magazine.

DALY, ELMER, and his sons, who have been missing since 1907, and were last seen in Lamoni, Iowa. Daughter and sister, Effie E., would be glad to hear from them. She has not seen her father since she was a baby. She is now married. Please write to Mrs. J. C. Garber, 1025 East Thirty-ninth Street, South, Portland, Oregon.

ATTENTION.—Will the nurse who attended me at the U. S. General Hospital, Fort Myer, Virginia, please write and let me know her address? She will remember me because I gave her a small heart-shaped stone with the following inscription on it: "W. G. Smith, Co. K, 5th U. S. V." It will help me get my pension. W. G. Smith, care of this magazine.

GRIFFIN, CHARLES ELROY.—He has not been heard of since he left Horton, Kansas, in May, 1920. Any information that will help to know where he is will be gratefully appreciated by his sister, Mrs. Orville McCluskey, 3280 Oak Street, Kansas City, Missouri.

MEADARS, GRANVILLE.—He is sixteen years old, with light-brown hair, blue eyes, prominent teeth, and stutters. He was last seen in Spiro, Oklahoma, in July, 1922, when he said he was leaving for Texas. His father is ill and would like very much to see his son. Any information that will help to reach him will be greatly appreciated by his mother, Mrs. Julia Meadars, 2425 McCoy Avenue, Kansas City, Missouri.

HARRIS, NELLIE, the daughter of Joseph and Rose Harris, both dead, and sister of Charlie, Bert, and Sydney. She was last heard from in London, England, in 1902. Sidney was killed during the Boer War, and Bert was killed in a coal mine in England. Her only remaining brother would be happy if he could hear from his sister and begs her to write to him as soon as possible. He will be grateful to any one who can help him to find her. Charles J. Harris, care of this magazine.

EAGER, LIZZIE, whose married name is unknown, and who is supposed to be somewhere in Connecticut. There is information for her regarding her father's property, and she is asked to write to M. M., care of this magazine.

TRULY, ROY.—He was last heard from in Newport News, Virginia, in August, 1920, and was then on his way to Canada. He is twenty-nine years old, five feet eight inches tall, of fair complexion, and has light sandy hair. His mother will gratefully appreciate any information as to his whereabouts. Mrs. Mary Truly, Columbia, Mississippi.

DELEFUS, ARCHIE.—He is supposed to be working in mines in and around Ajo, Arizona, for the past three years. His mother is very anxious to get news of him, and will be most grateful to any one who can give her information as to his whereabouts. His right eye is missing. Mrs. Theresa Delefus, 335 High Street, Perth Amboy, New Jersey.

LAVERY, J. J., sometimes called "Bozo," formerly of Pittsburgh. He is of large build, with light-red wavy hair and ruddy complexion. He was last seen in Detroit. He is asked to write to his buddy. E., care of this magazine.

DAVIS, CLAUDE.—He was last heard from in Detroit, Michigan, in 1920, where he was employed by the railroad. He is called "Buddie" by his family. His mother is very anxious to get a word from him, and begs him to write to her as soon as possible. Mrs. Blanche Davis, 522 Browder Street, Dallas, Texas.

CURL, JOHN and **BASS.**—Their sister, who has not heard from them for ten years, is very anxious to get news of them. Bass was last heard of in Monroe, Louisiana, four years ago. John is married. His wife's name is Alice, and they travel a great deal on business. Both brothers are now in their forties. Any one who can give information that will help to know their whereabouts will do a great favor by writing to their sister. Mrs. M. L. Turpin, 522 Browder Street, Dallas, Texas.

WILSON, JAMES.—Please, if you won't come home, write to your mother or to me. My heart is breaking. C. W.

CHARLEY.—Write to me at once. No one need know. I must write to you right away. Sister G. H.

BYRNE, ROBERT J., who ran away from Munising last May, was put on the train at Detroit by his uncle, and started home. He is sixteen years old, quite tall, with light hair, blue eyes, and face slightly freckled. He is probably working on a farm under another name. Any information will be thankfully received by Joseph P. Byrne, Lock Box 204, Munising, Michigan.

HEAVNER, BESSIE, who was last heard of in Detroit, Michigan, in 1910. She is the daughter of Gus Heavner, and lived at one time in Rosemer City, North Carolina. Information as to her whereabouts will be appreciated by G. H. Norris, care of this magazine.

MILLER, THOMAS A.—He was last seen in Boston on October 10th last. He is five feet seven inches tall, of dark complexion, with blue-gray eyes, black hair slightly streaked with gray at the temples. Any one who knows where he is will do a favor by writing to his wife, in care of this magazine, as she is very much upset at his absence.

ARTHUR.—The babies and I are very anxious to hear from you. Life is being made a misery for me here. Please take us away. I am very unhappy. Write to me in care of this magazine, or in care of Sarah. Louise.

COURTNEY, LEROY.—He is twenty years old, five feet seven inches tall, with dark-brown eyes and light-brown hair. He has been missing from his home for two years. There is important news awaiting him, and he is asked to write to his cousin, who will be glad to hear from any one who can give information as to his whereabouts. Mrs. F. C. Arnstadt, 804 Vankirk Court, N. E., Canton, Ohio.

TO CHICK R.—Received things O. K. Grandpa is very ill. Wish you could see him before it is over. He is always crying about you and wants to see you.—Otis.

SHATSWELL, RICHARD.—He is about forty-two years old, five feet five inches in height, of heavy build, and at times slightly squints with one eye. He was last seen at Soap Lake, Washington, headed for the coast. His brother would be happy to hear from him, or from any one who can tell him where he is. John Shatswell, care of this magazine.

BROOKER, GEORGE.—He is about five feet six inches tall, with black hair, brown eyes, and dark complexion, and is three quarter Indian. Any information as to his whereabouts will be greatly appreciated by a friend, G. B. Kendall, 911 East Hill Street, Independence, Kansas.

CLUBB, JOHN W. and **JAMES L.**—John is about forty-nine years old, and was last heard from in Benton, Missouri, about June, 1905. Jim is about forty-seven, short of stature, partially deaf, and walks with a limp. He was last heard of in South Dakota, about 1909. Their parents are getting old and are grieving for their missing sons, and it would give them great happiness to get news of them. Any one who can give information regarding them since the dates mentioned will do a great favor by writing to Mrs. Sophinia Lee, care of this magazine.

SCHULZ, F. ROLAND, who was last heard of in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1915. He is five feet five inches in height, of slender build, with light hair and complexion. Any information concerning him will be appreciated by his brother Henry, in care of this magazine.

TELLER, MRS. SUSAN, whose maiden name was Spurgeon, and who was last heard of in Stockton, California, in 1907 or 1908. Her niece would like very much to hear from her, or from any one of her children. Edith, care of this magazine.

FERN.—Dale would like to hear from you. Please write.

SMITH, BEATRICE R. S., formerly of Boston, and later of Chicago, where she had an uncle, and where she was last seen four years ago. She is asked to write to John, in care of this magazine.

McKELLIPS.—Am anxious to hear from any McKellips. Please send as much family history as possible. McKellips, care of this magazine.

REESE, SISTERS.—They were last heard of in Chicago in 1904. One married a Joe Hahn who lived with his people on the northwest corner of Twelfth and Wood Streets, and who was in the trucking business. The other sister, Ida, was employed for some years by a family on the corner of Twelfth and Western Avenue. There is important information for these sisters, and any one who knows their whereabouts will do a favor by writing to L. A. Frieling, 3019 North Lawrence Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

ALVIN.—Communicate with mother or me at once, as we are greatly worried. Russell.

OLIVER, ROY, ROBERT, and **ROGER.**—They were last heard from in Gulfport, Mississippi, in 1915, and are believed to be somewhere in Michigan. Buddies, please write to your old pal, L. E. Kehn, 425 Thirty-ninth Avenue, Meridian, Mississippi.

DEIDRICH, LEROY, or his wife, **BELLE.**—He was last heard of about seven years ago in Pueblo, Colorado. He is thirty-six years old, about five feet ten inches tall, with brown eyes and hair. His parents will be most grateful for any information that will help them to know his whereabouts and to communicate with him or his wife. Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Deidrich, 2013 North Eleventh Street, St. Louis, Missouri.

CRUMP, WILLIAM D.—Your stepbrother wishes to hear from you, and hopes you will write and tell him everything. He is still in the same town. Write in care of the "Four States Press." John Crump.

NOTICE.—I was adopted by the Reverend T. F. Jonas, of St. Louis, Missouri, when I was one year old, who told me that he got me from the Schierick College of Midwifery, at St. Louis. I am now about thirty-one to thirty-three years old. All records concerning me have been lost and I can obtain no information about myself at the college. I am five feet four inches in height, have large blue-gray eyes, dark-brown hair, a small mole on the outer corner of the left eye, and also a very tiny one on my back. I am hoping that perhaps some relative or some one who may know of my family may see this and recognize the description, and that I may find some one belonging to me. Joanna Jonas, care of this magazine.

KETCHEBAW, CLAUDE A.—He is twenty-three years old, tall, of slender build, with blue eyes and light hair. Both little fingers are crooked. The initials C. A. K. are tattooed on the forearm. He is asked to write home, as there is important mail for him. His people know all that happened in Kalamazoo, and are willing to help him, if he will only write to the same address where they lived when he went away, using any name he wishes. Any one who can give information that will help his family to communicate with this young man will do a great kindness by writing to John N. Noyes, care of this magazine.

BLUE, HELEN (BILLY).—She is about five feet two inches in height, with brown eyes and auburn hair, and was employed in a store in Pueblo, Colorado, in May, 1922. If she sees this she is asked to write to an old friend, who will be glad to hear from any one who knows her present address. Mickey, care of this magazine.

26,165 Miles Without a Stop

Write for Booklet (26,165 Miles Without a Stop) An absorbing story.

The Reliability Record

Days without Engine Stop.....58
Total Non-Stop Mileage....26,165
Average Miles Per Day.....449
Gas.—ave. miles per gal.....21.5
Oil—ave. miles per gal.....304.5

Replacements

At 22,106 mi.—Brake lining
At 24,955 mi.—Headlamp tie rod
At 24,997 mi.—Front Spring
At 26,165 mi.—Fan Belt

The first engine stop was necessitated by the breaking of the fan belt. The run was then continued two days, the total mileage at the end of 60 days being 27,096, on which the daily average is computed.

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In that time it traveled 26,615 miles over the roads of Utah, Idaho and Wyoming adjacent to Salt Lake City—farther by a great deal than the average car travels in two whole years.

The qualities revealed by the car in this test—its economy records—the way it stood up in continuous service such as not one motor car in a thousand is asked to give—these things are not remarkable.

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Little Rock
Atlanta
Columbia
Tallahassee
Montgomery
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Indianapolis
Columbus
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Boston
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Hartford
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Charleston
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The Man of Three Lives

THOMAS McMORROW

The "All-Time-Go" Man

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The Piece-work Gods Take Charge

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Another story about "The Great Macumber

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Are You the Lucky *One in Five?*

Not if your gums bleed easily

Wise are they that heed bleeding gums. They are fighting Pyorrhea, the sinister disease that attacks four persons out of every five past forty, and thousands younger, too.

Forhan's For the Gums, if used consistently and used in time, will prevent Pyorrhea or check its progress. Brush your teeth with it. It will keep them white and clean and your gums firm and healthy. Pleasant to the taste. At all druggists, 35c and 60c in tubes.

Formula of
R. J. Forhan, D. D. S.
Forhan Company
New York
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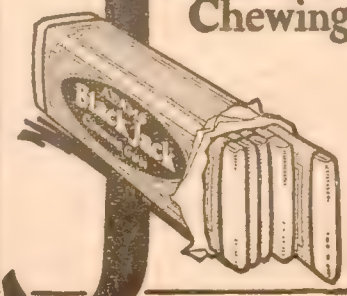
"Bully!"

Mellowy, mouth-watery "lickrish"!

Come on—get wise to that

"Good old licorice flavor!"

Black Jack
Chewing Gum



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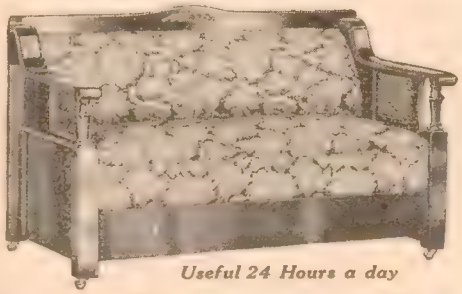

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Your Davenport-Sofa Bed—20c a Day

Upholstered in flowered tapestry or imitation leather. Cane-Panel ends. A roomy, attractive sofa for daytime. A [illegible]ful bed for nighttime. This Sofa and 1200 [illegible] attractive Furnishings offered in our big [illegible] Larkin Book of Better Homes. A trustworthy [illegible] thousands of home-lovers in home beautifying. Check below offer interested in.

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Desk FA-323 **BUFFALO, N. Y.**

"They've Made Me Assistant Treasurer"

"Rogers expected the job. Been with the house twenty years. But the Boss knew he hadn't put away a dollar. Said anyone who couldn't manage his own income wasn't the man to handle Company funds. The cashier at the bank told the Boss that I deposited interest coupons on a tidy little bunch of Bonds every six months and so I got the job. Our treasurer is getting old and will soon retire. The President says that if I make good I'll be the next treasurer."

The salaried employee who invests a portion of his income is destined to success. The one quality above all others that heads of business are seeking is financial responsibility.

Trust is never reposed in a spendthrift. A big salary doesn't necessarily mean wealth—doesn't buy homes, educate children or provide for old age. Financial independence depends on that portion of your salary which is invested.

A sound first mortgage is generally recognized as not only one of the safest but also one of the best paying investments.

A great advance in finance is the Columbia System of dividing a conservative, absolutely safe first mortgage on finest New York Realty into a lot of little mortgages or what are called Columbia First Mortgage Bonds. These Bonds enjoy all of the safeguards and privileges of the original mortgage and earn the same generous interest—6½%.

Columbia First Mortgage Bonds are obtainable in denominations of $1000, $500 and $100. A partial payment plan is provided. You can pay as little as $10 a month on a hundred dollar bond. Thousands of careful investors are making regular monthly payments on first mortgage bonds.

Send for a free book, "The Modern Security," of tremendous interest to anyone who wants to get ahead financially. It tells the wonderful story of how compound interest doubles the original investment; proves from every standpoint the soundness of Columbia First Mortgage Bonds; shows why New York City realty is the strongest security in the world.

Write for Book—T-54

COLUMBIA MORTGAGE COMPANY

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4 East 43rd Street, New York City

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Say "Bayer" and Insist!

Genuine BAYER

Unless you see the name "Bayer" on package or on tablets you are not getting the genuine Bayer product prescribed by physicians over twenty-two years and proved safe by millions for

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Accept "Bayer Tablets of Aspirin" only. Each unbroken package contains proper directions. Handy boxes of twelve tablets cost few cents. Druggists also sell bottles of 24 and 100. Aspirin is the trade mark of Bayer Manufacture of Monoaceticacidester of Salicylicacid.

Don't Wear a Truss

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BE COMFORTABLE—Wear the Brooks Appliance, the modern scientific invention which gives rupture sufferers immediate relief. It has no obnoxious springs or pads. Automatic Air Cushions bind and draw together the broken parts. No salves or plasters. Durable. Cheap. Sent on trial to prove its worth. Never on sale in stores as every Appliance is made to order, the proper size and shape of Air Cushion depending on the nature of each case. Beware of imitations. Look for trade-mark bearing portrait and signature of C. E. Brooks which appears on every Appliance. None other genuine. Full information and booklet sent free in plain, sealed envelope.

BROOKS APPLIANCE CO., 212G State St., Marshall, Mich.

Cuticura Talcum

Fascinatingly Fragrant

Always Healthful

Sample free of Cuticura Laboratories, Dept.D, Malden, Mass. Everywhere 25c.

FREE
For 10 Days Wear

Compare with a DIAMOND

Yes, free—not a penny to send. Just take your choice of these exquisite Tifnite gems and we will send it on our liberal 10 days' free trial offer. When you receive the ring, examine it closely. Note its dazzling brilliancy. Compare it with the finest diamonds. If you can tell the difference, send it back.

SOLID GOLD MOUNTINGS

It takes an expert to distinguish between a Tifnite and a genuine diamond. Tifnites stand every diamond test—fire, acid and diamond file. All set in latest solid gold mountings.

No. 1. Solid gold mounting; 8-claw design. Wide flat band. Almost a carat in size, guaranteed genuine Tifnite Gem. Price, $12.50; only $3.50 on arrival. Balance $3 per month.

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No. 3. Solid gold, six prong tooth Belcher mounting. Guaranteed genuine Tifnite Gem, almost a carat in size. Price, $12.50; only $3.50 on arrival. Balance, $3 per month.

Order Now—Quick! Tifnite Gem prices reduced—same now as before war. Easiest terms. Send strip of paper fitting exactly around second joint of finger for size and mention style wanted. Pay only $3.50 on arrival. No obligation—wear it 10 days. If you keep it, pay balance at $3 per month until special price of $12.50 is paid. If not satisfied, return it and get money back. Don't wait. Send today.

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"I can hear you with the MORLEY PHONE." It is invisible, weightless, comfortable, inexpensive. No metal, wires nor rubber. Can be used by anyone, young or old. The Morley Phone for the

DEAF

is to the ears what glasses are to the eyes. Write for Free Booklet containing testimonials of users all over the country. It describes causes of deafness; tells how and why the MORLEY PHONE affords relief. Over one hundred thousand sold

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Reduced Fac-Simile Gold Medal.

STUART'S PLAPAO-PADS are different from the truss, being medicine applicators made self-adhesive purposely to hold the distended muscles securely in place. No straps, buckles or spring attached—cannot slip, so cannot chafe or press against the pubic bone. Thousands have successfully treated themselves at home without hindrance from work—most obstinate cases conquered.

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Write name on Coupon and send TODAY.

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Name.....

Address.....

Return mail will bring Free Trial Plapao.....

DEAD FROM THE NECK DOWN

"He thought he was alive because he worked with his brain—but his body was fit for the undertaker."

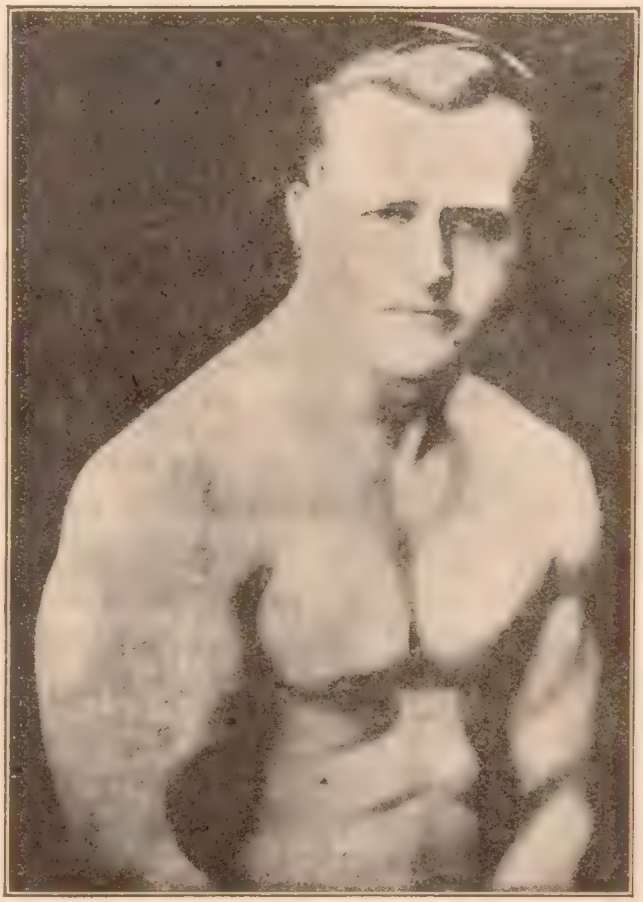
Can you imagine such a fellow calling himself a man? And still there are thousands like him — narrow-chested, round-shouldered, weak-kneed specimens of humanity. They would rather take a box of pills than do five minutes' exercise.

What Kind of a Man Are You?

Has life lost its thrills for you? Do you arise in the morning full of pep and ambition for the day's tasks before you? Or do you just drag yourself through life in a lazy, indifferent way?

There Is Hope—

If there is a spark of manhood left in you, I will give you a body to be proud of. I guarantee to put one full inch on your arms in the first 30 days. And from then on, just watch 'em grow. I will build out your chest, broaden your shoulders and put real pep in your old backbone. You will have the flash to your eye and the spring to your step of a real athlete. Your whole body (inside and out) will function as it should, sending life-giving blood to your brain and every part of your system. I don't just promise these things. I guarantee them. Come on now and make me prove it. That's what I like.



Earle E. Liederman as he is to-day

Send for My New 64-page Book

"MUSCULAR DEVELOPMENT"

It contains forty-three full-page photographs of myself and some of the many prize-winning pupils I have trained. Some of these came to me as pitiful weaklings, imploring me to help them. Look them over now and you will marvel at their present physiques. This book will prove an impetus and a real inspiration to you. It will thrill you from cover to cover. All I ask is 10 cents to cover the cost of wrapping and mailing and it is yours to keep. This will not obligate you at all, but for the sake of your future health and happiness, do not put it off. Send to-day—right now, before you turn this page.

EARLE E. LIEDERMAN

305 Broadway Dept. 5003 New York City

EARLE E. LIEDERMAN
Dept. 5003, 305 Broadway, N. Y. City

Dear Sir:—I enclose herewith 10 cents, for which you are to send me, without any obligation on my part whatever, a copy of your latest book, "Muscular Development." (Please write or print plainly.)

Name .....

Street .....

City ..... State .....

The Great Bell of Atri

THE village of Atri had a great bell that was rung only in time of need. For years it had been unused, for Atri was prosperous and content. Its rope, covered with green vines, trailed to the ground. One day a starving horse, turned out to shift for himself, seized the fresh, green tendrils in his teeth. The bell above him began to ring, attention was called to the predicament of the poor beast, and he became a well-fed ward of the town.

Advertising is a bell that is continually ringing to call your attention to something you need and ought to have.

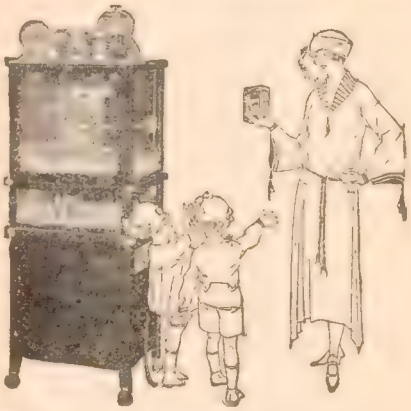
Manufacturers who are making something they think you will want are using its clarion notes to attract you to their wares.

Do you read the advertising? Many people do. They are the wise shoppers—the economical buyers—the ones who are strictly up-to-date on the opportunities for saving money or spending it to greatest advantage.

Read the advertisements. They will tell you of many things you need. Read them to save steps—to save money. Read them because they place before your eyes a moving panorama of business progress. Read them to keep yourself informed.

Read the advertisements regularly.
It pays

A New Butter-Kist Popcorn Machine at Half Former Price!



HERE'S a marvelous money-making opportunity—a beautiful, new automatic Butter-Kist Popcorn Machine at *half* what former models cost.

For a small down-payment this new Gold Mine Model will be shipped immediately to any responsible retailer. Within a few hours after its receipt you can be earning big profits, selling the world-famous Butter-Kist Popcorn, out of which you should easily and quickly pay the balance.

The "Gold Mine" is a beauty. Attractive mahogany-finished cabinet. Handsome glass sides. Highly polished nickel parts. Takes up little room. Feeds, discharges, pops and butters the corn automatically. Keeps the corn warm and crisp. Produces thirty 10c. packages an hour.

Butter-Kist Popcorn
"America's Oldest Treat"

Butter-Kist Popcorn sells fast. It's nationally known and advertised. People go out of their way to buy Butter-Kist. Out of every dollar's worth you sell, you keep 65 cents as *your* profit! F. J. Studer writes, "My Butter-Kist Popcorn profits have averaged over $900 per year for six years". R. C. Haegg says, "First six months' sales went over $2500". Many are making even more.

The "Gold Mine" attracts customers. Builds trade. Makes big profits. Write immediately for the new Butter-Kist Easy Payment Plan.

HOLCOMB & HOKE MFG. CO.

World's Largest Manufacturers of Popcorn Machines and Peanut Toasters

2154 Van Buren St. Indianapolis

Please send me, without obligation on my part, your free Butter-Kist book. I also want the Location Chart which I will fill out and return to you.

Name _____

Address _____

Business _____

The coupon will give you a quick start towards big profits. Fill in and mail TODAY.

The Ties You Like to Wear

A Basket weave all-silk Jacquard—smart and trim
A pleasing English Twill, colorful and in perfect taste
A Grenadine of beautiful quality in a voguish shade

JUST the fact that they are Cheney Cravats is more than enough to make you *like* these new Spring ties on sight—for you know what "Cheney" means in ties.

They offer you patterns and colorings that are unusually smart—cut and style that are up-to-the-minute—and an easy-tying material that is wrinkleproof, wearproof and holds its shape well.

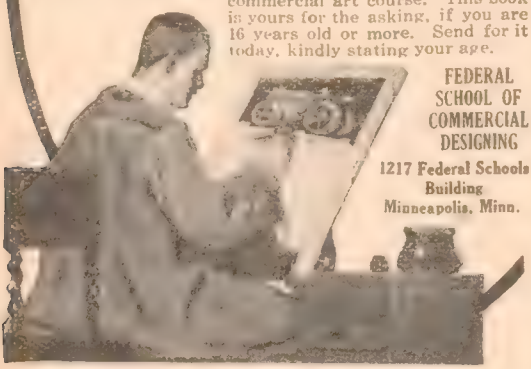
Especially sturdy are Cheney Tubulars, famous for their long life of good looks. Your favorite haberdasher has them.

CHENEY BROTHERS
NEW YORK
Makers of Cheney Silks

CHENEY CRAVATS

MEN! Send Today for "Your Future"

IF YOU are ambitious for **your** future—if you like to draw—give your natural talent a practical training. Good commercial artists earn $50, $75, $100, $150 a week—oftentimes much more. Get and read this free book "Your Future," showing remarkable work by Federal Students, many of whom **earn more than the course costs** while studying. Learn at home—turn your spare time into money. Each step is clear—no previous training needed. "Your Future" describes in detail the Federal "Master" Course, which contains **exclusive lessons** from leading American artists—gives you individual personal criticisms on all lessons—teaches you how to make drawings worth real money—and has produced **more successful students** than any other commercial art course. This book is yours for the asking, if you are 16 years old or more. Send for it today, kindly stating your age.



FEDERAL SCHOOL OF COMMERCIAL DESIGNING
1217 Federal Schools Building
Minneapolis, Minn.

Deaf Can Hear Says Science

New Invention Aids Thousands

Here's good news for all who suffer from deafness. The Dictograph Products Corporation announces the perfection of a remarkable device which has enabled thousands of deaf persons to hear as well as ever. The makers of this wonderful device say it is too much to expect you to believe this so they are going to give you a chance to try it at home. They offer to send it by prepaid parcel post on a ten-day free trial. They do not send it C. O. D.—they require no deposit—there is no obligation.

They send it entirely at their own expense and risk. They are making this extraordinary offer well knowing that the magic of this little instrument will so amaze and delight the user that the chances of its being returned are very slight. Thousands have already accepted this offer and report most gratifying results. There's no longer any need that you should endure the mental and physical strain which comes from a constant effort to hear. Now you can mingle with your friends without that feeling of sensitiveness from which all deaf persons suffer. Now you can take your place in the social and business world to which your talents entitle you and from which your affliction has, in a measure, excluded you. Just send your name and address to The Dictograph Products Corporation, 1381 Candler Building, New York, for descriptive literature and request blank.

Get This Wonderful Ring. If You Can Tell It From a Genuine Diamond Send It Back

These amazing, beautiful CORODITE diamonds positively match genuine diamonds in every way—same blazing flash and dazzling play of living rainbow fire. They, alone, stand the diamond tests, **including terrific acid test** of direct comparison. Lifetime experts need **all their experience to see any difference.** Prove this yourself.

Wear a Corodite Diamond 7 DAYS FREE

Make this test. You risk nothing. Wear a genuine Corodite and a diamond side by side on the same finger for 7 days. If you or your friends can tell the difference, send it back; you won't be out a single penny. That's fair enough. If you keep the ring, price printed here is **all you pay.** No installments. Remember, Corodites alone have **the same cutting as genuine stones.**

No. 1—Ladies' Solitaire 14K Gold S. Ring	$2.84
No. 2—Gents' Heavy Belcher 14K Gold S. Ring	$3.48
No. 3—Gents' Massive Hexagon Gypsy Ring	$4.27
No. 4—Ladies' Hand-Carved Basket Setting, platinum finish	$3.96
No. 5—Ladies' Tiffany Bridal Blossom Engraved	$3.56

Carat size gems. Beautiful mountings of most modern design. **Choice of gold or latest white platinum** finish. Unqualified 20-year guarantee. Handsome art leather case free with each ring.

SEND NO MONEY Keep your money right at home. Just send name, address and number of ring wanted and size as shown by slip of paper, fitting end to end around finger joint. Your ring will come by return mail. When ring arrives deposit amount shown above with postman. If you decide not to keep ring after 7 days' wear, send it back and your money will be immediately returned. Send today.

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333 S. Dearborn Street, Dept. 67, Chicago, Illinois
Sole Importers Genuine Corodite Diamonds

Here's a Prescription for Coughs

For quick relief try PISO'S—A most effective syrup different from all others. Safe and sane for young and old. Pleasant—no opiates—no upset stomach. 35c and 60c sizes obtainable everywhere.

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DIAMONDS
FOR A FEW CENTS A DAY
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SEND NO MONEY
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Don't send a single penny. Ten days Free Trial. When the ring comes examine it—if you are not convinced it is the Greatest Bargain in America, send it back at our expense. Only if pleased, send $1.50 weekly—at the rate of a few cents a day. This Bargain Cluster Ring with 7 Blue-White Perfect Cut Diamonds can be yours. No red tape. No risk.
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Free Trial

Forget Gray Hair

Mary T. Goldman's Hair Color Restorer is a clear, colorless liquid, clean as water. No greasy sediment to make your hair stringy or streaky, nothing to wash or rub off. Restored color even and perfectly natural in all lights, no danger of streaking or discoloration. Faded hair or hair discolored by unsatisfactory dyes restored just as safely and surely as naturally gray hair.

My Restorer is a time-tested preparation, which I perfected many years ago to bring back the original color to my own prematurely gray hair. I ask all who are gray haired to prove its worth by sending for my special patented Free Trial package.

Mail Coupon Today

Send today for the special patented Free Trial package which contains a trial bottle of my Restorer and full instructions for making the convincing test on one lock of hair. Indicate color of hair with X. Print name and address plainly. If possible, inclose a lock of your hair in your letter.

FREE TRIAL COUPON

Please print your name and address

Mary T. Goldman,
39C Goldman Bldg., St. Paul, Minn.

Please send your patented Free Trial Outfit. X shows color of hair. Black..... dark brown..... medium brown..... auburn (dark red)..... light brown..... light auburn (light red)..... blonde.....

Name .....

Street ..... City .....

Two brothers, Alton and William Livingston, both born with Club Feet, were treated at McLain Sanitarium with the splendid results set forth by their mother in this letter:

My oldest boy, Alton, was treated for Club Feet when 3 yrs. old at the McLain Sanitarium with such satisfactory results that when William was born with Club Feet, 10 years later, we took him to McLain's when 11 wks. old. 8 wks. later we brought him home with straight, perfect feet. Inquiries gladly answered.

MRS. CLARENCE LIVINGSTON,
205 Washington St., Salisbury, Maryland

Pictures show William at 11 weeks, and his present condition.

CRIPPLED CHILDREN

You may know some. Tell their parents of the McLain Sanitarium, a thoroughly equipped private institution devoted exclusively to the treatment of Club Feet, Infantile Paralysis, Spinal Diseases and Deformities, Diseases of the Joints, Wry Neck, etc., especially as found in Children and young adults.

Write for their book, "Deformities and Paralysis," and "Book of References," mailed free.

The L. C. McLAIN ORTHOPEDIC SANITARIUM
954 Aubert Avenue **St. Louis, Mo.**
F-413-B

She is No Longer Fat

She found a way to reduce her fat. It was a way far more pleasant than dieting or exercising would have been. This new way allowed her to eat foods without danger of becoming fat again.

She found *Marmola Prescription Tablets*. They aid the digestive system to obtain the full nutriment of food. They help Nature to turn food into muscle, bone and sinew instead of fat.

Marmola Prescription Tablets are made from the famous Marmola prescription. Thousands have found that these handy tablets give complete relief from obesity. And when the accumulation of fat is checked, reduction to normal, healthy weight soon follows.

All good drug stores the world over sell *Marmola Prescription Tablets* at one dollar a box. Do not accept any substitute. If some drug salesman attempts to sell you something else, insist on being supplied with *Marmola Prescription Tablets*. Should the druggist be temporarily out, order direct and they will be sent in plain wrapper, postpaid.

MARMOLA COMPANY
283 Garfield Bldg., Detroit, Mich.

MANUFACTURERS Sell Below Cost

$7.45 PREPAID

SEND NO MONEY

Overstocked! We are forced to offer our finest ladies' watches below wholesale cost. 20-yr. guarantee. 10-jewels. 14 kt. gold-filled watch. 20-yr. gold bracelet, silk grosgrain ribbon and clasp. ALL for $7.45. $15 value. Stem wind and set. Stylish octagon or round case. Gold dial. Splendid time-keeper. Sent in velvet gift case. Send no money, just name and address. Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded. Write today.

SUPREME JEWELRY MFG. CO.
Dept. 218 **434 Broadway** **New York**

Amazing Offer
Genuine
DIAMOND
PLATINUM RING

Send No Money!

This exquisite Solid *Platinum* Ring, set with a superior Blue-White perfect-cut Diamond, sent FREE for examination and approval. If entirely satisfied, upon arrival pay only $10—Balance only $5 a month. (Can be furnished in men's setting without extra charge.)

Blue-White perfect cut diamond **Solid Platinum** *mounting, carved and pierced. SWEET'S special,* **Price, $65.00**

FREE **Diamond Book.** Thousands of other wonderful values in Diamonds, Watches and Jewelry shown in our newest 98-page diamond book. Send for a copy to **Dept. 183-H.**

Capital $1,000,000

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Learn good trade in a few weeks. 12 million autos, trucks and tractors need service. Repairmen needed. Write today for FREE catalog giving full particulars.

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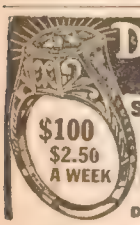

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SEND NO MONEY

$4.98

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This beautiful high grade ladies' small size, octagon watch, with choice of gold finished link or ribbon bracelet guaranteed gold finish ($15 value). Special advertising price $4.98. Stem wind and set, beautiful case, attractive gold dial, splendid movement, good timekeeper. Sent in Morocco finish, silk lined gift case.

Gold Filled

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But Your Nose!

(Above illustration represents my "Trade-Mark" and shows my first and oldest Nose Shaper. It is not a replica of my latest superior Model No. 25.)

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The Ladies' Ring (*upper illustration*) is an elaborate pierced model executed in 14-K solid green gold, with an 18-K hand engraved and beaded white gold top. A striking new model. It is set with a large brilliant, blue-white, top quality, perfectly cut, genuine diamond — a remarkably big value, worth at least $50.00 anywhere. Our price is only $38.75, with a year to pay. ($3.75 a month.)

The Men's Ring (*lower illustration*) is a handsome new fluted design, extra massive 14-K solid gold with an 18-K hand engraved and beaded white gold top. Set with a large brilliant, blue-white, top quality, perfectly cut, genuine diamond. Try to duplicate this ring for fifty dollars. Our price is only $38.75, payable $3.75 a month, a year to pay.

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Genuine Diamonds

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Harold Lachman Co. 204 S. Peoria Street Dept. 1923 Chicago

Send me absolutely free and prepaid, for a week's trial, the GENUINE DIAMOND RING checked below. I enclose no money. At the end of one week I am to pay nothing when it arrives. At the end of one week I will either return the ring or else send you $3.75 first payment and $3.75 each month, until your cut price of $38.75 is paid. Title remains with you until fully paid. I ENCLOSE MY FINGER SIZE.

☐ Ladies' Ring No. A4350 ☐ Men's Ring No. A4450

Name _____

Address _____

Age _____ Occupation _____

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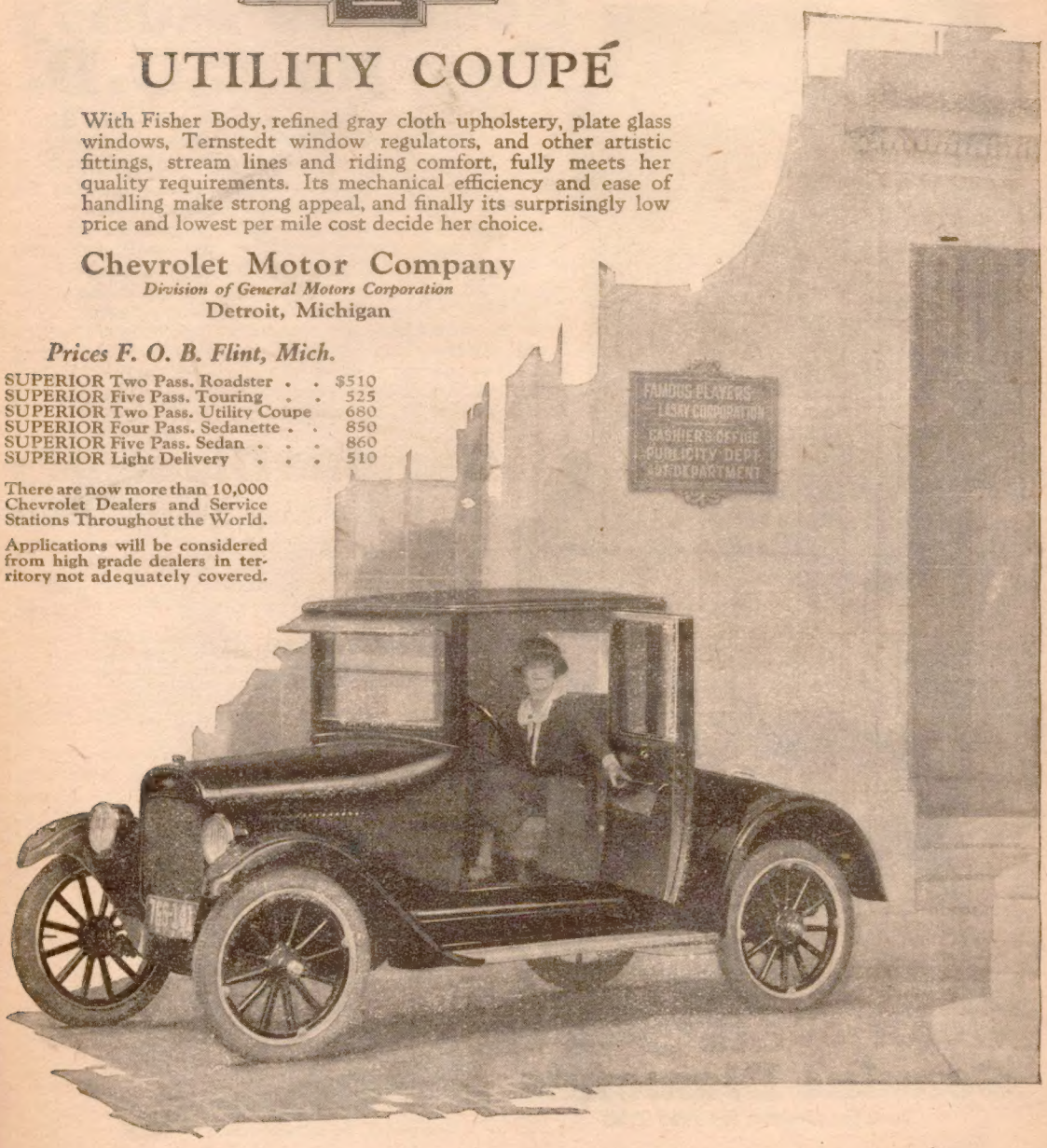

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